REPORT BY THE

Comptroller General

OF THE UNITED STATES

Improving The Management And Coordination Of Reviews, Inspections, And Evaluations In The U.N. System

The aim of the Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations is to improve management and coordination in the U.N. system. The Unit is the only organization that has authority to review, inspect, and evaluate the U.N. system organizations and programs on either an individual or systemwide basis. Through increased exchange and discussion of work programs, an improved followup procedure on report recommendations, and greater U.N. member support, the Unit can increase its effectiveness.

GAO recommends that the Department of State appoint a senior officer to make sure that adequate support and attention are provided to the work and reports of the Unit. The Department should also continue to support the establishment of an Auditor General and an expanded Board of Auditors that would be in a position to receive and discuss the work of the Joint Inspection Unit.

UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

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COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

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GAO 00001

To the President of the Senate and the RSN00002
Speaker of the House of Representatives GHS00004

This report discusses ways that management and coordination of reviews, inspections, and evaluations in the U.N. system can be improved by member governments and through increased support of the Joint Inspection Unit by the Department of State. We made our review pursuant to Section 301(e) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1973 (Public Law 93-189). CNG00815 DLG02868

We are sending copies of this report to the Secretary of State; to the Director, Office of Management and Budget; and to the appropriate congressional committees. AGC00032 AGC00990

Comptroller General
of the United States

COMPTROLLER GENERAL'S REPORT TO THE CONGRESS

IMPROVING MANAGEMENT AND COORDINATION OF REVIEWS, INSPECTIONS, AND EVALUATIONS IN THE U.N. SYSTEM

D I G E S T

Because member governments in the United Nations during the late 1960s and early 1970s became concerned about the financial management and effectiveness of U.N. programs, a number of actions were taken to improve the external and internal auditing and evaluation of U.N. activities. One such action was to create a Joint Inspection Unit whose aim is to improve management and coordination in the U.N. system. The Unit is the only organization with the authority to inspect or evaluate U.N. programs or activities either individually or on a systemwide basis.

In 1973, the Congress, at the suggestion of GAO, amended the Foreign Assistance Act, requiring the President to seek the creation of an independent review and evaluation group in the United Nations. The Congress also required the Comptroller General to prepare auditing and reporting standards to assist the review and evaluation group; to periodically review reports and related information from the group; and to make recommendations as necessary to the Congress and the President.

In response to the 1973 amendment, the Department of State supported the U.N. General Assembly's revision of the Joint Inspection Unit statute to expand its role to include external evaluation of U.N. systems and to provide for its further independence. In August 1979, the President began transmitting copies of Unit reports to the Comptroller General and the Congress in accordance with Section 301(e) of the Foreign Assistance Act.

ID-81-11

Tear Sheet. Upon removal, the report cover date should be noted hereon.

STAFF OPERATIONS AND PROCEDURES

With the adoption of its new statute, the Unit increased the number of inspectors and has expanded its scope, resulting in more useful reports and assistance to the United Nations. The Unit could still be more effective, however. GAO noted, for example, that the General Assembly--the appointing body--is not always aware of the background and qualification of candidates, and that more inspectors should be appointed with backgrounds which are similar to the work performed by the Unit. In addition, duplication of reviews can be avoided with a more open exchange of ideas and work programs between all review groups.

Unit reports contain a number of recommendations which suggest ways to improve the activities of organizations reviewed, but the information on the status of Unit recommendations is fragmented and is not readily available to member governments. There is a need for a comprehensive annual report showing the status of recommendations. (See p. 11.)

The opportunity for the Unit to present its reports and discuss its work before an enlarged Board of Auditors as recommended in GAO's report "Improving Financial Management in the United Nations by Strengthening Audits and Evaluations," (Sept. 24, 1979, ID-79-56), would, in GAO's opinion, improve the review and evaluation capability of the United Nations. GAO reaffirms its recommendations that an Auditor General position be established in the United Nations as well as an expanded Board of Auditors. (See p. 12.)

EVALUATION ASSISTANCE

The U.N. system has made advances in its evaluation activities, aided by the Unit and other U.N. system organizations and committees. Improvements in evaluations can

be further aided by an increased management commitment to completing evaluation systems and preparing evaluation reports and through the intensified efforts to review and critique evaluation reports. (See p. 16.)

REVIEWING AND REPORTING STANDARDS

The Unit has only limited review and reporting standards because the work of the inspectors is guided more by tradition and common sense. In comparing Unit reports with the review and reporting standards suggested by the Comptroller General and provided to the United Nations by the U.S. representative, GAO noted that the underlying causes of findings were not always adequately set out, sufficient data supporting findings was not included, and recommendations were often too general. In addition, opposing views, which may have related to underlying causes for conditions found, were often not cited.

GAO believes that written guidelines will assist new inspectors, provide for more consistent quality in reports, and enable member governments to more adequately understand the work of the inspectors. (See p. 29.)

STATE DEPARTMENT SUPPORT

The State Department has supported the Unit in various forums in the U.N. system. This support, however, could be strengthened.

GAO believes that if the State Department analyzed Unit reports and their recommendations more closely, U.S. representatives to the various U.N. forums would be in a better position to more effectively support the reports and recommendations and, in some instances, to seek improvements in the work of the Unit. Without this analysis, the State Department support often consists of broad statements. In some instances, no support is provided. GAO further believes that the State Department needs an effective

focal point headed by a sufficiently senior executive who could assure that adequate attention is given to reports and their recommendations. (See p. 33.)

RECOMMENDATIONS

GAO recommends that the Secretary of State instruct U.S. Mission and U.S. delegates to the United Nations to work with other member-country delegates to stress the need to

--consider and appoint highly qualified candidates as Unit inspectors who have experience which parallels the inspection and evaluation work performed by the Unit;

--encourage the Unit to exchange and discuss work programs with other review groups, such as internal and external audit groups and other U.N. organizations involved in inspections and evaluations. In this regard, GAO believes that the State Department, through its representatives to the United Nations, should continue to support the establishment of an Auditor General position and an expanded Board of Auditors;

--have U.N. organizations carefully consider requests to the Unit, taking into account the needs of the U.N. system, and whether objectives can be accomplished through other means;

--have the Unit annually publish the status of their recommendations;

--urge U.N. system organizations to complete the design and installation of their internal evaluation systems as quickly as possible and provide evaluation results, when practicable, to all member governments; and for the Unit to intensify its review efforts of the reports of various internal evaluation systems and urge an increased commitment of U.N. organization executive heads to evaluations;

--have the Unit adopt specific reviewing and reporting guidelines that will be made available to member governments. (See pp. 13, 27, and 32.)

GAO also recommends that the Secretary of State specifically assign a senior officer at the State Department to be the focal point for insuring that adequate support and attention is provided to Unit work and reports at all times. (See p. 35.)

AGENCY COMMENTS

Department of State officials said that they fully concurred with the thrust of our report, and that the Department and its Missions have consistently supported moves to increase the effectiveness of the Unit. The Department did, however, note a few reservations about some of the report conclusions and recommendations. These reservations primarily stressed the independence of the Unit. GAO believes that the recommendations will not adversely affect this independence. The reservations and GAO's evaluation are further discussed in Chapters 2 and 4.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACC	Administrative Committee on Coordination
CCSQ	Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions
CPC	Committee on Programing and Coordination
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GAO	General Accounting Office
ILO	International Labor Organization
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
PPC	Program Planning Coordination Office
U.N.	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
WHO	World Health Organization

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations (U.N.) system has over 150 member countries and is composed of about 30 organizations and agencies. The system has no central budget and is financed through assessments and voluntary contributions. U.N. system activities range from peace-keeping to development. Of the approximate $3 billion spent by the U.N. system in 1978, the United States contributed approximately $728 million.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, member governments became quite concerned about improving financial management and the effectiveness of programs in the U.N. system. As a result, the United Nations took a number of actions to improve the external and internal auditing and evaluation of U.N. system activities. One such action was to create a Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) in 1967. The Unit had broad investigative powers covering all U.N. operations, however, it had no specific evaluation responsibilities.

At our suggestion, the Congress, in 1973, amended the Foreign Assistance Act (Section 301(e) (22 U.S.C. 2221)) to require the President to seek creation of an independent review and evaluation group in the United Nations. The Congress also required the Comptroller General to prepare auditing and reporting standards to assist the review and evaluation group; to periodically review reports and related information from the group; and to make recommendations as necessary to the Congress and the President.

Rather than seek the establishment of a new U.N. body to meet the evaluation needs and the provisions of the 1973 amendment, the Department of State decided to encourage the strengthening of JIU. In 1975 and 1976, the United States and other member states in the United Nations inquired into JIU activities and decided to permanently establish the Unit and to modify its statute. The U.N. General Assembly approved this revised statute in December 1976 which took effect on January 1, 1978.

The major changes from the previous statute were as follows.

--JIU became a subsidiary body of the U.N. General Assembly and many participating organizations' governing bodies rather than being attached to the Secretary General. In addition, if their constitution permitted

it, the Unit could become a subsidiary body of other participating organization governing bodies.

--The inspectors were appointed by the U.N. General Assembly instead of the Secretary General. The principle of equitable geographic distribution was retained and a provision for reasonable rotation among countries was added.

--The number of inspectors was increased from 8 to 11.

--JIU was given a new role in the external evaluation of U.N. system programs and activities.

--The executive heads of participating organizations were required to distribute copies of JIU reports to member states upon receipt.

The President initially transmitted copies of JIU reports to the Comptroller General and the Congress in August 1979. In his letter to the Comptroller General, he stated that the reports were being transmitted in accordance with the Foreign Assistance Act, Section 301(e)(3).

AIM OF JIU

JIU is located in Geneva, Switzerland, and is comprised of 11 inspectors, 6 research officers, an executive secretary, and 9 other staff members. A chairman and vice chairman are elected each year from among the inspectors. The chairman coordinates the JIU work program and is the formal channel of communication with the United Nations.

The aim of the unit is to improve management and coordination in the U.N. system. Its work program has categories of inspections and evaluations.

In carrying out its inspection duties, JIU

--provides an independent view to (1) improve the methods of participating organizations of the U.N. system and (2) achieve greater coordination among those organizations;

--determines whether activities undertaken by the participating organizations are completed the most economically and the optimum use is made of available resources;

--proposes reforms or makes recommendations deemed necessary to the competent bodies of the participating organizations.

JIU evaluation efforts include:

--assisting intergovernmental bodies in the external evaluation of programs and activities;

--advising participating organizations on methods for internal evaluations and periodically assessing the organizations' progress in this area; and

--performing ad hoc evaluations of programs and activities.

JIU issues three types of products resulting from its inspections and evaluations: reports, notes, and confidential letters. From January 1978 to June 1980, the Unit issued 33 reports and 5 notes (see app. I). JIU also issues an annual summary of its activities. Reports are addressed to U.N. organization executive heads, but usually require action by legislative bodies before all recommendations can be implemented. Notes deal with less important issues, and implementation of recommendations is within the authority of the executive head of each organization. JIU seldom issues confidential letters. When confidential letters are issued, however, they indicate some small personnel-type matters in a single organization which it believes would be best handled within that organization.

The current JIU 2-year budget is about $4.2 million which is shared by the participating U.N. system organizations, based on the relationship of their expenditures to the total U.N. system expenditures.

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

We examined the reports which the Unit issued since January 1978 and some of the actions taken as a result of their reports. We also assessed JIU work methods and reporting in light of the auditing and reporting standards the Comptroller General suggested which were transmitted by the Department of State to the United Nations. Further, we obtained information on the status of evaluations in a number of U.N. organizations and we ascertained the Department of State role in reviewing and monitoring JIU reports and the organizations' actions in responding to JIU recommendations. Although we previously

looked at JIU work, this is our first comprehensive review in accordance with Section 301(e)(3) of the Foreign Assistance Act.

AGC00543 In conducting this work, we reviewed records and documents and held discussions with personnel from the Department of State Bureau of International Organization Affairs; the U.S. Missions in Geneva, New York, Vienna, and Paris; and with U.S. representatives to U.N. agencies in Rome.

Because the U.N. system as an international body is outside our audit authority, however, we were limited in our examination of U.N. documents and reports to those that are generally available to member governments. In conjuction with U.S. representatives to the international organzations, however, we did hold discussions with JIU personnel; the United DLG00525 Nations and its subsidiary organizations; the U.N. Development Program (UNDP); the Children's Fund; DLG00576a the U.N. Fund for Drug Abuse Control; the World Food Program; the U.N. Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO); and with personnel in the CNG00852 U.N. specialized agencies of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO); the International Labor Organization (ILO); the CNG 00855 U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); the World Health Organization (WHO); and the World Meteorological Organization. CNG01108 DLG02872

CHAPTER 2

FOCUSING ON OPERATIONS, PROCEDURES, AND REPORTING

In accordance with its new statute, JIU has increased the number of its inspectors and staff, and has expanded the scope of evaluation work. Although significantly increasing the costs of the Unit, these changes should contribute to a more effective Unit and should result in more useful reports and assistance being rendered to the United Nations.

We believe the Unit can be even more effective if additional consideration is given to the appointment of inspectors; to the development, coordination, and execution of work programs; and to the establishment of a formalized system of reporting on the status of report recommendations. The latter two areas could be vastly improved if the member governments which have recognized the need for improved evaluations and financial management acted to (1) expand the U.N. Board of Auditors and (2) create the position of Auditor General, thereby giving the Board the ability to coordinate the JIU work and reports and all other U.N. system review and evaluation groups.

INCREASED STAFF TO COPE WITH ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

With the adoption of the new JIU statute, the number of inspectors was increased from 8 to 11, provision was made for hiring research assistants, and some clerical positions were added. The JIU staff, including inspectors, increased from 20 in 1977 to 27 in 1980. The JIU expenditures rose from about $1.9 million for 1976 and 1977 to about $3.8 million for 1978 and 1979, and are budgeted for about $4.2 million for 1980 and 1981.

The main reason for the increase in the JIU expenditures after 1977 is related to the increase in the number of inspectors and the inspectors' new responsibilities in the area of evaluations. In the area of evaluations, for example, the JIU budget request outlined a need for 3 more professional positions and 6 general service positions. The request noted that the evaluation function is a new and complex activity and that the inspectors will need an adequate staff (1) for collecting, organizing, and analyzing a great mass of data; (2) in establishing evaluation methodologies for various activities; and

(3) for reviewing and assessing the evaluations of the participating organizations. We believe this increase in the number of inspectors and staff was needed to cope with the complex operations of the U.N. system.

Appointment of inspectors

In selecting inspectors, the President of the General Assembly is to consult with member states to compile a list of countries which would be requested to propose candidates with due regard to the principle of equitable geographical distribution and reasonable rotation. The President of the General Assembly would then, through appropriate consultations--including consultations with the President of the Economic and Social Council and the Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC)--be required to review the qualifications of the proposed candidates and submit a list of candidates to the General Assembly for appointment. With repsect to the number and qualifications of inspectors, the JIU statute states that:

> "The Unit shall consist of not more than eleven Inspectors, chosen from among members of national supervision or inspection bodies, or from among persons of a similar competence on the basis of their special experience in national or international administrative and financial matters, including management questions. The Inspectors shall serve in their personal capacity."

Acting under the provisions of the new statute, the General Assembly appointed 11 inspectors in 1977. Of these inspectors, five had previously been members of the Unit and six were new appointments. To prevent all terms from expiring at the same time, five inspectors were appointed for only 3 years instead of the normal 5-year term. In looking at the biographical data the United Nations published, we noted that all inspectors had impressive backgrounds and work experience. Most inspectors' experience was either in the diplomatic service or in the educational departments of their countries, and only one inspector had service in a national inspection or supervision body.

To fill the vacancies that would occur when the 3-year terms expired and to replace an inspector who resigned, in December 1979 the General Assembly reappointed three inspectors, appointed two new inspectors, and delayed the decision on one appointment until the fall 1980 session. The General

Assembly approved the list of proposed candidates without discussion, even though for some candidates, biographical data was not available to all assembly members. We noted, however, that one new member had experience as an inspector of finance and as a director of a state budget.

The inexperience of most inspectors in national inspection or supervision bodies or in financial organizations did not prevent the Unit from completing its inspections and evaluations. Time was inevitably lost while some inspectors became familiar with the new inspection and evaluation areas and with the financial implications of their recommendations. Therefore, we believe the effectiveness of the Unit as a whole would be strengthened if more, but not exclusive, consideration is given to appointing inspectors with work experience which is more similar to JIU work. In addition, the members of the General Assembly would be able to make informed decisions if provided information on candidate qualifications before deciding on the appointments.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE WORK PROGRAM

The permanent statute requires that JIU prepare an annual work program which reflects inspectors' views on subjects and priorities for inspection, in addition to requests from governing bodies or suggestions from executive agency heads or intergovernmental U.N. bodies. According to the JIU Executive Secretary, the Unit also has a 6-year plan that includes work in the areas of (1) development cooperation, (2) personnel management, (3) programing and budgeting, (4) evaluation, (5) conferences and documentation, and (6) management questions. The plan is an internal JIU working document and is not provided to the General Assembly or the Secretary General. This plan is used in the annual work programing process and is usually updated by the inspectors at that time.

The annual work programing process begins in September or October. The JIU Executive Secretary writes to the executive heads and governing bodies of participating organizations asking for suggestions. These suggestions, legislative or other requests for work, and ideas from the inspectors themselves, form the basis for discussion of the work program. All inspectors meet each December to discuss (1) the potential work areas and to determine a work plan for the coming year; (2) the inspector or inspectors who will perform the review; and (3) the research officers who will assist the inspectors. No item is included in the program unless agreed to by the inspectors. The program can be revised during the year, and a job can be abolished once underway, but these changes also require the consensus of the inspectors.

Traditionally, the JIU work program has been divided between self-initiated and requested work. In deciding upon work to be done, JIU considers the effect of the workload on particular organizations and tries to include studies that will result in about half of the reports addressing system-wide matters and the other half addressing problems in single agencies or in small groups of agencies.

Number and type of inspection reports

Of the 25 JIU reports issued during 1978 and 1979, approximately 18 reports can be classified as inspection-type reviews; the remaining 7 deal with partial or full evaluations. Of the 18 inspection reports, we noted that 2 were sent to the executive heads of all U.N. participating agencies; 3 reports went to 2 or more executive heads; and 13 reports were sent to one executive head for action. Many reports were also sent to the executive heads of other agencies or organizations for their general information. These reports dealt with varied subjects, such as personnel policies, information systems, the use of consultants, and training centers. Many reports were based on specific requests to JIU by U.N. system organizations and committees. These requests were made to JIU although there are other organizations and methods for performing the work. The activities or programs reviewed received various amounts of U.N. funding, ranging from about $150,000 to millions of dollars, annually.

We noted that several reports dealt with the same subject, although in different geographical locations. In discussing JIU work with personnel in several U.N. organizations, we were told that they hoped that the JIU work would address more substantive programs or areas, and would complete more work that had systemwide application. Several U.N. personnel stated that reports on systemwide problems and concerns were especially helpful because they indicated strong and weak areas in the U.N. system. An Eastern European delegate to the Fifth Committee expressed similar concern in October 1978. He noted that JIU had departed from consideration of items that were of primary importance to the United Nations; that some of the reports were not relevant; and that JIU should more carefully consider reducing costs in U.N. system programs, conferences, and other activities.

IMPROVED COORDINATION OF THE WORK PROGRAM WITH OTHER REVIEW GROUPS NEEDED

JIU provides its work program to top management in the U.N. system, but for the most part there is only a limited exchange of work programs or discussions among JIU, the U.N. system internal review groups, and the external auditors. The external auditors include the Board of Auditors for the United Nations and its subsidiary agencies and the appointed External Auditor for the U.N. specialized agencies. Some duplication has occurred, and a potential for future duplication exists.

The U.N. Board of Auditors receives copies of the JIU work program and occasionally holds discussions with JIU, but the External Auditor for one of the specialized agencies apparently does not. One External Auditor representative said he had never seen a JIU work plan nor met with the inspectors to discuss work areas. We were also informed that the Panel of External Auditors and an association of U.N. internal auditors have met annually in Geneva, but JIU, although located in Geneva, was not invited to participate.

In discussing the coordination of work programs with the UNDP internal auditor, we learned that coordination is almost nonexistent between the two groups. For instance, although the UNDP internal audit group regularly reviews the use of vehicles, the group did not learn of the JIU review until after the JIU inspectors had completed their fieldwork in two countries. One JIU official, however, stated that the inspectors informed the UNDP management and the resident representatives of the review. Further, in finalizing their report, JIU did not seek the views of the UNDP auditors although the inspectors said that they held discussions with UNDP managers. Additional coordination may also be lacking within UNDP, because UNDP management did not provide a copy of the JIU report to the internal audit group or seek their opinions in providing comments to the governing body.

Although we did not meet with the U.N. Administrative Management Service, the JIU official said that they exchange work programs with the Service staff and that they have regular consultations with them. Similar arrangements with other internal audit groups, such as that of UNDP, would also seem appropriate.

Also in the area of evaluations, we noted the lack of effective coordination between JIU and the U.N. Programing Planning Coordination (PPC) office--a unit headed by an Assistant Secretary General which supervises internal program evaluations. Acting upon a request of the Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (CCSQ), the PPC unit distributed a questionnaire to U.N. organizations in the fall of 1979 regarding the status of their evaluation systems, although JIU had previously planned similar work.

When JIU learned of the PPC work, an agreement was reached whereby PPC discontinued their effort and JIU continued their planned status update on evaluations in the U.N. system. The information PPC gathered was not provided to JIU, thus causing some additional work for evaluation personnel in the U.N. system. One specialized agency official expressed annoyance at the lack of coordination between the two groups. An exchange of work programs among all review groups and better efforts at exchanging ideas either informally or formally between review groups would be more effective in contributing to the sound management of U.N. resources.

EXECUTION OF WORK PROGRAMS

The execution of work programs varies according to the inspector and the type of review being conducted. Many reviews, however, depend more on the use of mailed questionnaires than on indepth field visits by the inspectors. In conducting their reviews, the inspectors are guided essentially by tradition and common sense rather than by written policies and procedures.

Using questionnaires can be very beneficial in conducting reviews because time is saved and a uniform response is more likely. Some U.N. system personnel we spoke to said that for the most part questionnaire data is accepted without verification, but JIU personnel stated that the information given in questionnaires is used and tested in field visits, conversations, and reviews. Apparently the extent and use of questionnaires varies according to the type of review being conducted and the individual inspector conducting the review.

Officials we met believe that the questionnaire technique poses some serious problems. Several officials believed that the questionnaires were too general and asked for data that was really not necessary. The time taken to respond was cited by some officials as being too long, and because extraneous data was requested the problem was compounded. We could not specifically determine what normal review methods or tests JIU uses

during its reviews. Generally, the issued reports do not contain statements on the tests made or special methods used or on other available review information JIU considered, such as external or internal audit reports. Further, JIU workpapers are not retained on a consistent basis, although we were informed that supporting data is retained at least until the reports have been considered by appropriate governing bodies. The only permanent files are the questionnaire responses received from the participating organizations. We believe that there is a need for a consistent policy regarding the preparation of work papers and the use of questionnaires. The establishment of written policies and procedures as discussed in chapter 4 will provide this consistent approach.

NEED FOR AN OVERALL REPORT ON THE STATUS OF JIU RECOMMENDATIONS

JIU reports contain a number of recommendations which (1) suggest improvements to the activity or organizations reviewed or (2) apply to most U.N. organizations. The actions suggested by the recommendations can often be implemented by the executive head or administrator. In other instances, however, a decision by a governing body is necessary before any changes can take place. In some instances, the recommendations may be rejected because of differing opinions, implied costs, or because circumstances have changed.

Currently, there is some data available on the status of JIU recommendations but it is fragmented and not readily available to member governments. The JIU Executive Secretary, for example, keeps a file on each issued report and monitors the comments prepared by organizations' executive heads and actions recommended by the organizations' governing bodies. We were informed that although the JIU statute states that annual reports to the U.N. Economic and Social Council should include information on the work of the Unit related to the respective organizations, no such reports are currently issued. Only U.N. headquarters and UNESCO prepare detailed annual reports on the status of JIU recomendations as they affect their organizations.

We believe that in addition to individual organization reports, one comprehensive annual report showing the status of JIU recommendations would be helpful to those organizations responsible for reviewing JIU work. JIU could prepare this report and it could be included as part of the annual report to all U.N. members. This suggestion is similar to that of a representative to the Fifth Committee who, in October 1978, stated that he believed it might be useful if the JIU reports

included those past problems the Unit considered on which action was still pending. The report would then enable member governments to focus on the various JIU recommendations and on the actions that are planned or have been taken as a result of the recommendations. This attention should help to insure that JIU recommendations receive the attention they deserve and that JIU adequately supports their findings and recommendations.

Currently, JIU essentially only follows up on recommendations during the course of major reviews which may be several years after an initial review. During our review, we noted that executive leaders have not always implemented promised actions in response to JIU recomendations. If JIU annually selected a few for verification, stating the results in their annual report, it would insure that promised actions on recommendations have been taken. This would be in accordance with the JIU statute which states that JIU can be asked to verify the implementation of approved recommendations or can initiate this verification.

PROPOSAL TO BETTER COORDINATE AND ACT UPON U.N. REVIEWS AND EVALUATIONS

In our report, "Improving Financial Management in the United Nations by Strengthening Audits and Evaluations," (ID-79-56, Sept. 24, 1979), we made several recommendations to improve reviews and evaluations in the United Nations. One recommendation was directly related to JIU work.

We recommended that audits, reviews, and evaluations of the United Nations be reported to the General Assembly through a newly expanded Board of Auditors. The expanded Board would help coordinate JIU work and if given the opportunity to present reports to the Board, the Unit would increase the exposure of their findings within the United Nations. We believe that this approach would be particularly successful if the position of the Auditor General were created, giving the Board the ability to coordinate JIU work and reports as well as all other U.N. system review and evaluation groups.

CONCLUSIONS

JIU expenditures under its new statute, compared with those expenditures just preceding its new statute, have doubled. This will contribute to making the Unit more effective through an increase in inspectors and staff and through improved operations and procedures. Nevertheless, we believe that the Unit can still be more effective.

The proposal that more candidates have work experience similar to that of the JIU inspection and evaluation work would enable the new inspectors to more quickly focus on JIU work. The recent appointment of an inspector with this type of experience should help bring valuable experience and knowledge to the Unit. We believe also that information about the candidates' backgrounds and experience should be available to all General Assembly members before appointments are decided.

JIU cannot improve its work, however, without the cooperation of member governments and executive heads of U.N. organizations. Although JIU independently prepares its own work program, the Unit tries to respond to requests for assistance. It is important, therefore, that the U.N. organizations carefully consider their requests to JIU, considering the needs of the U.N. system and whether their objectives can be accomplished through other means, including the use of consultants or the services of internal or external auditors.

A more conscious effort by JIU and the various review groups in the United Nations to exchange work programs and to discuss work areas would, in our opinion, limit duplication, thus conserving limited U.N. resources. We also believe the proposal to establish an Auditor General position and an expanded Board of Auditors could help coordination in the U.N. system and provide for more thorough consideration of JIU reports. The newly expanded Board of Auditors would then improve U.N. reviews and evaluations.

An overall report on the status of report recommendations which focuses on the progress in implementing JIU recommendations and on the result of selective cases where JIU reinspection would contribute to insuring that report recommendations are actually taking place.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that the Secretary of State instruct U.S. Mission and U.S. delegates to the United Nations to work with other member-country delegates to stress the need to:

--consider and appoint highly qualified candidates as JIU inspectors who have experience which parallels the inspection and evaluation work performed by JIU, and that all General Assembly members have a chance to review and discuss the qualifications of the inspectors before deciding on the appointments;

--have U.N. organizations carefully consider requests to JIU, taking into account the needs of the U.N. system, and whether objectives can be accomplished through other means;

--annually publish the status of the JIU recommendations; and

--encourage JIU to exchange and discuss work programs with other review groups, such as internal and external audit groups and other U.N. organizations involved in inspections and evaluations. In this regard, we believe the State Department, through its representatives to the United Nations, should continue to support the proposal to establish an Auditor General position and an expanded Board of Auditors.

AGENCY COMMENTS

In their comments, State Department officials indicated that they did not fully agree with our conclusions and recommendations. (See app. II.) State Department comments and our evaluations follow.

1. There should be no discussion in the General Assembly before appointment of JIU inspectors because current review procedures are adequate and discussions could increase the political element in the selection process.

   Our Evaluation:

   The JIU statute provides that the inspectors should be appointed by the General Assembly. We believe that the General Assembly should have a sound basis for its decisions.

2. The GAO view that the JIU work programs should be widely coordinated with a variety of other bodies is inconsistent with the way the U.N. system works and with the JIU statute which by design provides for the complete independence of the Unit.

Our Evaluation:

We believe in the independence of JIU and fail to see how discussions among various review groups lessen the independence of the groups. The discussions and exchange of work programs should assist in making reviews and inspections more effective by avoiding duplication and allowing concentration on the more important issues, programs, and subject areas.

3. In proposing an annual status report on the JIU recommendations, GAO did not quantify the staff time and financial resources that would be needed nor did we consider program priorities and end use.

Our Evaluation:

We believe that the detailed analysis as suggested by the State Department can best be performed by JIU and other U.N. organizations. In addition, this detailed task would be difficult to perform because we do not have audit rights in international organizations. However, many officials we spoke to, including some JIU inspectors, believe that there is a need for an annual status report on JIU recommendations.

4. The independence of JIU would be impaired, if an enlarged Board of Auditors would have some vague oversight responsibility of JIU, and the external audit function would be watered down if an expanded Board of Auditors had some responsibility for audits and the work of JIU.

Our Evaluation:

We believe, however, that an expanded Board of Auditors would help affect coordination among the groups and would help increase the exposure of the JIU reports and findings within the United Nations. This would not change the basic methods and procedures for selecting and

performing audit reviews and inspections by the involved organizations, and thus, the independence of JIU would not be lessened nor would the audit functions of the external auditors be watered down.

CHAPTER 3

U.N. SYSTEM EVALUATIONS

Evaluations have been receiving increased attention in the U.N. system as organization executive heads and governing body members have become increasingly concerned about the effectiveness of their activities. JIU and several U.N. organizations and their committees have helped improve U.N. evaluations.

In our last report,[1/] we stated that evaluations had not yet reached the stage where U.N. decisionmakers could systematically receive valid information about the effectiveness of U.N. activities, and we called for improved and increased evaluations to make such information available to managers and member governments. Since our report was issued, the U.N. system has improved its evaluations, but further progress is needed.

JIU AND OTHER U.N. ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED IN EVALUATION IMPROVEMENTS

Several organizations in the U.N. system have been involved in improving evaluations. JIU is currently devoting 40 percent of its budget to improving evaluations, as are other organizations, such as PPC, Committee for Program and Coordination (CPC), and CCSQ.

JIU evaluations

One of the JIU functions under its revised statute is the responsibility to assist in and conduct evaluations of U.N. system organizations. JIU efforts to improve evaluations in the U.N. system actually began before the effective date of the 1978 statute. In 1977, JIU issued a status report on evaluations in the U.N. system and called for U.N. organizations to improve their evaluations. That report also contained the following section on the future JIU role in evaluations:

> "The first task of the JIU in evaluation must be to encourage the establishment of effective internal evaluation procedures within each organization * * * the JIU

1/"Improving Financial Management in the United Nations by Strengthening Audits and Evaluations," (ID-79-56, Sept. 24, 1979).

should also undertake regular reviews of the internal evaluation systems of each of the agencies and offer advice and assistance in improving these processes. It should selectively review the results of some of the internal evaluations and offer corrective advice where appropriate * * *.

"The JIU should, as required by its new statute, undertake ad hoc external evaluations sometimes working with the agencies involved. Generally, however, it should concentrate its ad hoc evaluation efforts on system-wide problems and issues rather than single agency issues * * *."

Assistance to U.N. system organizational and intergovernmental bodies

JIU has given the subject of evaluation a wide audience and spurred the implementation and improvement of internal evaluation systems through its reports, sponsored meetings, and informal organization contacts. Most officials with whom we spoke, including many chief evaluation officers, believed that the JIU work in evaluation assistance had been beneficial in helping overcome the resistance to evaluation in the U.N. system by cutting across organizational lines. They also told us that JIU reports have helped urge U.N. management to devote increased attention to evaluations.

JIU has issued three general reports on evaluation since its permanent statute took effect. The 1978 report covered the status of U.N. programing and related evaluation techniques and methods. The other two reports provided general guidance to the participating organizations and fostered a common understanding of the evaluation area.

One report was a glossary of evaluation terms. Virtually all participating organization officials, particularly the evaluation officers, believed that this report was extremely helpful. They stated that the report provided a common frame of reference that has greatly facilitated communication. In 1979, the ACC and the U.N. General Assembly approved the report of evaluation terms, recommending its use throughout the U.N. system.

The other report provided initial guidelines to U.N. organizations to establish evaluation systems and was intended to provide an initial common framework to assist in developing

internal evaluations. Most officials we contacted believed that the report had fulfilled its purpose. The guidelines were particularly helpful to the smaller agencies and also provided U.N. system organizations with a framework for discussion. Because JIU stressed that the guidelines were not intended to foster a rigid standardized system, they were accepted by most organizations. The guidelines were approved in 1979 by the U.N. General Assembly and ACC.

Starting in 1977, JIU also sponsored two informal meetings involving U.N. system organizations' chief evaluation officers. Participating organization officials generally believed that these meetings have been the most beneficial actions taken by JIU in the evaluation area. These officials believed that the informality of the meetings and neutral JIU sponsorship promoted a free exchange of ideas. Evaluation officers with whom we talked were especially pleased to learn what other organizations were doing and generally found the sessions professionally stimulating.

In conjunction with the U.N. Institute for Training and Research, JIU has also developed a training program for members of intergovernmental bodies. The program is geared to inform these people about evaluations and the use of the various reports. The program is scheduled for 1980, and members of several intergovernmental bodies will be invited.

Participating organization officials have also told us that JIU has had numerous informal contacts with them to discuss evaluations and that these contacts have resulted in improvements in internal evaluations. For example, WHO drafted guidelines for its internal evaluation system in 1977 and requested that JIU review them. JIU held numerous meetings with WHO evaluation personnel to discuss and refine the guidelines. These meetings continued after the second draft of the guidelines later in 1978. As another example, the combination of informal JIU contacts at the Director-General level and the 1977 status report prompted UNESCO to move the responsibility for evaluation to a higher organizational level and to expand its internal evaluations.

Ad hoc evaluations

JIU has completed three ad hoc program evaluations since its permanent statute took effect. The first involved the U.N. Public Administration and Finance Program. The report was issued in March 1978 and indicated that evaluating the effect of the program was very difficult because: problems existed with the program itself and there were also problems

with the programing and evaluation systems of all U.N. programs. The difficulties prompted JIU to undertake a system-wide review of programing and evaluation.

The second JIU program evaluation involved the U.N. system's technical cooperation to Sri Lanka. Again, JIU encountered many difficulties in carrying out the evaluation. Chief among these difficulties was the absence of a national development plan and UNDP country program and the lack of specific measurable objectives for most of the individual programs or projects reviewed.

The third program evaluation concerned the translation process in the U.N. system. In the report, which was issued in April 1980, the inspectors concluded that although the translation services by and large are functioning well, there are apparent considerable opportunities to realize cost savings; improve translation management, productivity, and effectiveness; and more fully consider the results.

At the time we began our fieldwork in February 1980, JIU was already engaged in a study updating its prior report on the status of U.N. system evaluations. Plans called for visiting more than 20 U.N. system organizations to discuss progress made since 1977 and to make a limited review of the reports of some internal evaluation systems. In addition, JIU was undertaking an evaluation of the U.N. Disaster Relief Organization.

Program Planning and Coordination Office (PPC)

PPC was established in late 1977 within the U.N. Secretariat Department of International Economic and Social Affairs. The Office provides support to both the CPC and ACC. Its assistance involves enhancing the effectiveness of the planning, programing, and evaluation processes and assisting in the promotion of interorganizational cooperation within the U.N. system.

As an outgrowth of the JIU report in 1977 calling for the establishment of internal evaluation units within U.N. organizations, an evaluation unit was created within PPC. The unit, however, was slow in becoming operational and in carrying out its responsibilities because a staff was needed. Initially, one staff position was approved and two additional posts were approved in late 1979. In the justification for the two new posts, it was noted that the unit would be conducting in-depth evaluation studies and would be designing methodologies to monitor and evaluate U.N. programs in the economic and social sectors; participate in the preparation of in-depth

evaluation studies in those sectors; and assist units of the United Nations in developing a capacity for internal monitoring of evaluation activities.

At the same time the evaluation unit was set up, a high-level steering committee was established with a mandate to provide guidelines and offer assistance in resolving problems of PPC. The committee was also established to ensure effective and continuing support of evaluations at all levels of management. The Director-General for Development and International Economic Cooperation chairs this steering committee, and the membership consists of the Under-Secretary-General for International Economic and Social Affairs, the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management, and the Assistant Secretary General of PPC and the head of the program to be evaluated. PPC has conducted two evaluations under the above arrangement--transnational corporations and manufactures programs. The evaluations, however, were conducted using borrowed staff.

In June 1979, CPC reviewed the evaluation conducted in 1978 by PPC dealing with transnational corporations. The Committee expressed its appreciation for the high quality of the report and commended the U.N. Secretariat for its honesty in undertaking the evaluation. At its 1979 meeting, the Committee also emphasized that it should continue to address evaluation procedures as well as substance and that it was important that the PPC evaluation unit be provided the proper expertise.

In 1979, the PPC evaluation unit reviewed the U.N. manufactures programs. The 1980-81 work plan includes

--development of an internal evaluation system for the United Nations,

--one or two program evaluations, and

--attempts to increase compatible evaluation activities among all organizations in the U.N. system.

The estimated cost of the PPC evaluation unit for 1980-81 is about $339,000.

Committee for Program and Coordination (CPC)

CPC is composed of 21 U.N. members including the United States, and is a subsidiary body of both the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. The Committee meets

periodically to discuss specific areas of interest in the economic and social field to U.N. system members. It can examine reports and studies which others such as JIU and PPC have done or it can request such studies. In 1978, the Committee held extensive discussions on the internal evaluations that were undertaken and the work of the JIU in the area of evaluation. In 1979, the Committee discussed the evaluation report prepared by PPC on transnational corporations. The Committee has also requested that JIU undertake studies such as the review of medium-term planning in the U.N. system and the review of the U.N. Public Administration and Finance program. Further, in 1979 the Committee obtained from JIU a list of then-current JIU studies. The list included the status of the studies and the names of the governing bodies that were to consider any recommendations. We were informed that the Committee used this information to help plan its agenda and help decide on the extent of evaluation requests it would make of PPC.

Consultative Committee of Substantive Questions (CCSQ)

CCSQ is a subsidiary body of ACC. This Committee can be convened to consider both operational activities and program matters, and in recent meetings on both types of matters made evaluations a major topic of concern. At a meeting in Rome in late 1979, CCSQ considered a number of topics including evaluations. During the discussions, evaluations quickly emerged as a topic of U.N. systemwide concern. The decision was made to have a paper on evaluations prepared for the 1980 meeting which identified common problems with evaluations in the U.N. system.

In early March 1980, the joint meeting was held in Geneva and considered a paper identifying common impediments to effective evaluations in the U.N. system and JIU actions on evaluations. The participants reaffirmed that the JIU glossary of evaluation terms be adopted by the U.N. Secretariat and specialized agencies. The participants also recommended that JIU look into questions arising out of discussions at the meeting and meet informally with the Committee secretariats and the evaluation staff of the PPC office to propose appropriate follow-up actions.

STATUS AND TYPES OF EVALUATIONS

The degree of progress made in establishing effective evaluation systems varies considerably within the different U.N. organizations. Some organizations practice self-evaluation and others practice central evaluations, but the key constraint to effective evaluations is the absence of active

support for evaluation from some legislative and intergovernmental bodies, organization management, and individual countries.

The status of evaluations in the U.N. system has been summarized in a paper which was prepared for a specialized agency in the spring of 1980.

> "The least developed of the several processes in the programming, planning, budgeting, and evaluation activity in the United Nations system is that of evaluation. Efforts have been pressed over the years in most of the agencies of the system, but it is admitted that much more is to be achieved before this aspect can be considered on the same level of development and acceptability as the processes of planning and programming and budgeting."

Another paper prepared for CCSQ stated:

> " * * *while increased attention is being devoted to evaluation throughout the United Nations system with varying degrees of priority and effectiveness, the percentage of programmes and projects being subjected to rigorous and systematic evaluation is still very small. Where such evaluations are carried out, the function is not yet having as appreciable an effect as desired either on improving the quality, relevance, and effectiveness of technical co-operation and other development activities or in providing useful information to member states and intergovernmental bodies and agency executive heads, as well as programme and project managers."

Based on the organizations we visited, we classified U.N. system organizations into three groups according to their internal evaluation systems: (1) organizations with established evaluation programs already underway, (2) organizations which have taken major steps in establishing an evaluation system but which have not yet completely implemented their plans, and (3) small organizations which are only beginning to establish an evaluation capability.

Many organizations had not reached the stage where their evaluation activity would result in reports. In some organizations, management had not yet committed sufficient resources to enable evaluations to progress beyond the design stage.

Even those organizations with well-established evaluation systems were unable to meet the large demand for evaluations.

Organizations with established systems

Of the organizations we visited, UNDP, FAO, and the World Food Program had established evaluation systems. All three agencies had created central evaluation units. The UNDP central unit is located in the Bureau of Program Policy and Evaluation. This latter organization had 15 staff members. The World Food Program evaluation unit had a staff of 10 and the FAO Evaluation Service had a staff of 8. These units were often supplemented by outside consultants.

All three organizations have generally been conducting project and program evaluations for over a decade. UNDP began evaluating projects in 1967, but before 1977 these evaluations were not done systematically. In 1977, UNDP introduced another evaluation approach as a regular activity--program or thematic evaluation. FAO and the World Food Program began their evaluation efforts between 1967 and 1968. Before 1978, FAO had only concerned itself with field project evaluations, but has since included regular program activities. To evaluate regular program activities, FAO instituted a self-evaluation system to be followed by all program officials. The World Food Program conducts external project evaluations, and its Director of Evaluations estimates that his unit has reviewed about half of the more than 1,000 projects initiated since the unit was established.

Both FAO and World Food Program officials have stated that they are unable to keep up with demands for evaluations. The World Food Program Director of Evaluations stated that they attempt to do more interim and final evaluations, but because of the unit's backlog, final evaluations are not always done. The Chief, FAO Evaluation Service, stated that his unit was unable to accommodate all evaluation requests. He estimated that his unit had been able to evaluate about 20 percent of the FAO field projects.

Organizations that have made progress

Four other large organizations we visited--WHO, ILO, UNIDO, and UNESCO--have made major strides in developing their evaluation capabilities, but have still not fully implemented their evaluation systems. These organizations have chosen to introduce some form of self-evaluation capability into their regular program activities. They have hired some staff and established evaluation program guidelines and methodologies,

but generally have not received any reports from the systems. Furthermore, some of the organizations face funding constraints in their quest for additional resources to fully implement their systems. Several officials told us that evaluation is progressing in their organizations, but the progress is very slow.

In 1977, WHO established an informal unit to develop an evaluation system and disseminate information on evaluation methodology. The unit, which primarily consists of one professional, is now in the process of implementing a self-evaluation system. The system is primarily based on guidelines drafted by the informal unit in 1978 and on a computerized information system that became effective in January 1978. At the time of our fieldwork, the information system was still not fully operational and only limited evaluation reports had been produced.

Since it was established on a trial basis in 1976, the ILO evaluation unit has produced evaluation manuals, and has begun the process of developing evaluation methodologies and guidelines. ILO chose the self-evaluation concept to review its regular programs. Its senior evaluator stated that progress has been slow, but he believes that the situation is improving. ILO has acted to add two members to the staff, and the senior evaluator believes that evaluations are now at the point where they will begin to show results. He informed us, however, that no evaluation reports had yet been published.

UNIDO began placing more emphasis on evaluations in late 1976 when it hired a consultant to develop an evaluation unit. Presently, the unit consists of two people, although additional staff had been requested in 1979. The UNIDO evaluation unit has developed guidelines and manuals on project and program design and evaluation methods. The proposed evaluation system consisting of project self-evaluatións and external program evaluations to be jointly undertaken by UNIDO and funding organizations, has been accepted by the UNIDO governing body.

Actual design of the systems and approval of additional staff has not occurred, however, because of funding constraints. According to the head of the UNIDO evaluation unit, less than one-third of its projects receive mid-term reviews and those reviews are inappropriately labeled as evaluations. He added that generally only project monitoring, not evaluation is presently being done in UNIDO.

Before 1977, UNESCO was doing very little in the way of evaluations. In the 1977-78 timeframe, an evaluation unit was established and staffed with one professional. Since then, the unit has published a glossary of evaluation terms and guidelines for conducting evaluations and is also preparing an evaluation training package for the UNESCO staff. The unit still consists of one senior evaluator, however, and lacks the necessary funds to fully implement its proposed training program. We were told that less than 10 percent of the UNESCO operational projects receive systematic evaluations.

Other efforts

Evaluations in smaller organizations lag far behind those of the larger organizations, but they are progressing. The two smaller organizations we visited--the World Meteorological Organization and the U.N. Fund for Drug Abuse Control--are now attempting to develop evaluation capabilities.

In the past, the Meteorological Organization relied on funding organizations such as UNDP to evaluate projects it carried out. According to a Meteorological Organization official, agency efforts currently labeled as evaluations are actually only statistical program summaries. The Meteorological Organization is now becoming more interested in project evaluations, however, and is in the process of creating an evaluator position. Evaluation and reporting guidelines will come from UNDP.

U.N. Fund for Drug Abuse Control officials are also becoming more interested in evaluations, partially because of a JIU recommendation that the Fund devote more time to evaluations. Because the Fund staff is small, however, its officials believe they should devote only a limited time to evaluations. Officials stated, however, that they were prepared to undertake the type of evaluation program recommended by JIU, using outside experts.

Obstacles to successful evaluations in the U.N. system

As previously noted, at a CCSQ meeting in March 1980, a paper was considered that identified the common impediments to effectively evaluating the U.N. system: (1) extent of support for evaluation, (2) credibility of evaluation findings, (3) failure to define (and obtain agreement on) purpose of specific exercises, (4) inadequate feedback and marginal use of findings, (5) uneven application of existing evaluation

policies and methodologies and an absence of technical preconditions, (6) insufficient clarity on roles and responsibility for evaluation, (7) resistance to change, (8) noncompliance and absence of incentives, (9) loose application of the "evaluation" label, (10) unrealistic expectations, and (11) the "piece-meal" approach to evaluations.

In addition, some evaluation officials told us that the greatest problem to be overcome was the absence of active support for evaluations from legislative and intergovernmental bodies, organization management, and individual countries. Although the statements of top-level managers and governing bodies reflect a commitment to evaluations, many evaluation officials have questioned this commitment. They have stated that often organization management is merely "paying lip-service" to evaluation activities. As evidence, these officials pointed to the lack of resources being provided for evaluations. There is also the question of priority in some organizations. In one organization, for example, the Director-General believes that evaluations are very important, but are less important than the delivery of services. It appears to us that many of the problems identified could be alleviated if organizational management were more committed to evaluations and backed this commitment with positive action.

Member-government access to evaluation results

At organizations responsible for administering projects, evaluation results will be reviewed by executive heads and internal committees and then will be provided to governing bodies in a summary form. Generally, member countries will have access only to summaries of evaluation reports.

Most organization officials believe that the organizations are not accountable to governing bodies at the level of detail contained in internal evaluation reports, and evaluation officials believe that releasing detailed evaluation data could threaten the evaluation process. These officials believe that unrestricted distribution of evaluation reports and data could cause:

--difficulties in gaining access to country projects;

--self-evaluations to be less candid and objective (that is, reports would be written for governments rather than to assess project progress and problems); and

--increased workloads and possibly even chaos, as organizations attempt to respond to countries' requests for evaluation data.

Some U.N. organizations, however, stated that they provided detailed evaluation reports to any government requesting them. WHO officials have stated that almost all evaluation reports should be available to member governments although some might require clearances from the countries being evaluated. In addition, the UNDP Governing Council requested in 1978 that thematic evaluations be published in a UNDP series and appropriately distributed.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The U.N. system has made advances in its evaluations and these advances have been aided by JIU and other U.N. committees and organizations. The internal evaluation systems in U.N. system organizations have become more operational, however, reports are still rather limited. Evaluations in these organizations must be improved so that responsible organization officials and member governments can receive valid information on project and program effectiveness and properly decide which projects and programs are meeting their objectives, and which should be continued, expanded, contracted, or terminated. With a larger management commitment in U.N. system organizations, improvements in evaluations can be further aided.

Present plans in many U.N. system organizations call for publishing only summary information for the member governments. In that case, the member governments need assurance that the evaluation systems are providing valid and sufficient data to organization decisionmakers. To provide this assurance, JIU should intensify its efforts to review and critique the evaluation reports.

To help improve the U.N. evaluation system, we recommend that the Secretary of State work through his representatives in the U.N. system and with other member government representatives to:

--urge U.N. system organizations to complete their internal evaluation systems as quickly as possible, and provide evaluation results when practicable to all member governments;

--seek to have JIU intensify its reviews of the evaluation reports; and

--urge U.N. organization executive heads to increase their commitments to evaluations.

CHAPTER 4

ADOPTING COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW AND REPORTING STANDARDS SHOULD ASSIST JIU INSPECTIONS

JIU has only limited written review and reporting standards. They are contained in the JIU statute and in an internal manual. As previously noted, the work of the inspectors is guided more by tradition and common sense, which reflects the individual inspector's experience, training, and education. Because the inspectors represent many geographical areas of the world, their backgrounds can vary considerably. We believe that adopting review and reporting standards will assist inspectors, provide for more consistent quality of reports, and enable member governments to more adequately understand the work of the inspectors.

LIMITED JIU WRITTEN GUIDELINES

JIU statute states the Unit will determine standards and procedures for the conduct of inquiries and investigations. The JIU statute, however, embodies requirements which are similar to some of the basic standards suggested by the Comptroller General in 1975.[1/] For example, the statute provides that:

--JIU develop an annual work program and submit it to the Secretary General for transmission to the executive heads of organizations and bodies of the U.N. system.

--JIU should report on its review activities. Individual reports should include a summary of conclusions and recommendations to be signed by the inspector(s) involved, and should include findings and proposed solutions to the problems noted. JIU should also prepare an annual report on its activities and submit this report to the U.N. General Assembly.

1/"Statement of Auditing and Reporting Standards for the United Nations," (ID-75-60, Apr. 22, 1975).

--Executive heads of organizations reviewed should transmit copies of JIU reports with their comments to the governing bodies. Special arrangements would be followed to handle reports concerning more than one organization.

--JIU would issue follow-up reports on actions taken to implement recommendations approved by governing bodies.

Some JIU officials said they had seen the Comptroller General's recommended standards and procedures but viewed them as a common-sense approach to review work. They also noted that the suggested standards and procedures are for audits and that JIU inspectors are not auditors. These JIU officials also believed that operations had to be conducted somewhat differently in the complex international environment in which JIU finds itself.

Although the permanent statute includes some of the suggested review and reporting standards, we believe that JIU should develop and adopt additional formal guidelines. This guidance should help the inspectors and make the reports more useful to the users and member governments.

COMPARISON OF JIU REPORTS WITH COMPTROLLER GENERAL SUGGESTED STANDARDS

We reviewed 14 of the 25 JIU reports issued from January 1978 to December 1979 and compared them with the JIU statute requirements and with the reporting standards suggested by the Comptroller General. The reports we analyzed usually complied with the statutory requirement for a summary and embodied many of the Comptroller General's recommended standards, although the degrees of observance in the latter case varied. For example, the reports generally

--included a statement on objectives and briefly explained the scope of the review,

--highlighted recommendations,

--were written in clear and concise language and were directed at the correct audience,

--were promptly sent to the executive heads of participating organizations,

--emphasized improvements needed and commented on noteworthy accomplishments, and

--sometimes identified issues and questions for further study by JIU and others.

Our discussions with officials from the participating organizations disclosed that they generally believed that the underlying causes of findings were not always adequately set out; sufficient factual data supporting findings was often not included; and recommendations were often too general. Our review of JIU reports tended to confirm these beliefs, and we noted that opposing views which may have been related to underlying causes for conditions found were not often cited, and that it was difficult to tell the financial implications of most recommendations. We believe that, whenever possible, the data supporting the recommendations should include information on the funds that will be saved or the additional funds that will be needed to carry out the recommendations. This will help organizations more quickly focus on issues and will help them in planning.

The JIU reporting technique on individual review results involves using numbered paragraphs from the beginning to the end. In its summary of a report's conclusions and recommendations, JIU often refers to a paragraph or series of paragraphs in the body of the report, presumably for further information and support. Our analysis showed that these paragraphs in the body of the report often provided very little additional support for the inspector's conclusions or recommendations.

Several participating organization officials offered a possible explanation for the relative absence of data supporting inspectors' conclusions and recommendations. Several officials of participating organizations believed that many of the inspectors followed the old concept of inspection used in the diplomatic corps in which little was required to support the inspectors' conclusions because of their esteemed positions in the diplomatic service.

CONCLUSIONS

Although JIU reports could be improved by adopting more specific written reviewing and reporting guidelines, most reports were done well. We believe, however, that with the rotation of inspectors and the diversity of backgrounds and experiences that they bring to JIU, guidelines can help improve JIU work. This does not imply that guidelines should be a check list or a substitute for good judgment or experience.

The guidelines will assist new inspectors, provide for more consistent quality of reports, and enable member governments to more adequately understand the work of the inspectors.

RECOMMENDATION

We recommend that the Secretary of State instruct his representatives to the United Nations and the specialized agencies to work with other member governments to formulate a request that JIU adopt specific review and reporting guidelines that will be made available to member governments.

AGENCY COMMENTS AND OUR GAO EVALUATION

The Department of State commented that we compared JIU reports with GAO reporting standards for the U.S. Government, and that we implied that to the extent the standards are not followed, the JIU work needs to be improved. In addition, the State Department noted that an international organization cannot be expected to base its procedures on a manual of operations for a single member state. (See app. II.)

We stated at the time that the review and reporting standards suggested by the Comptroller General were provided to the United Nations in 1975 by the U.S. representatives that they were for consideration by the governing bodies of the United Nations in formulating the terms of reference for an independent review body. Although we recognize that in the international arena there are many justified differences of opinion and ways of accomplishing a task, we found that JIU had only limited standards. We never suggested that JIU base its procedures on a manual of operations of a single member state. We do suggest, however, that in the absence of any comprehensive review and reporting standards to guide the Unit in its work, that the JIU develop and adopt specific review and reporting guidelines. In this regard, JIU may wish to consider the Comptroller General's standards on auditing and reporting.

CHAPTER 5

THE STATE DEPARTMENT COULD INCREASE ITS SUPPORT OF JIU

The Department of State has supported the work of JIU over the years in the various forums in the U.N. system and has helped revise the statute to increase its independence and scope of responsibility, particularly in the area of evaluations. State Department support could still be improved, however.

We believe that if the State Department analyzed JIU reports and recommendations in more detail, U.S. representatives to the various U.N. forums would be in a better position to more effectively support the many good reports and recommendations of JIU and, in some instances, to seek improvements in the work of the Unit. Lacking this detailed analysis, State Department support is often left to general statements, and in some instances no support is provided. We believe that the State Department needs an effective focal point headed by a sufficiently senior executive who could assure that adequate attention is given to JIU reports and recommendations.

BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION AFFAIRS

The Managing Director, International Management Staff, Bureau of International Organization Affairs, has overall responsibility for JIU reports and for related actions and U.S. positions. The actual work connected with JIU, however, is centered in the Office of U.N. System Coordination which receives JIU reports and many of the related actions taken on report recommendations by pertinent executive officers or administrators, committees, and governing bodies. There is no systematic procedure to assure that the Bureau receives all pertinent information or that all JIU reports are reviewed and analyzed.

The Director, Office of U.N. System Coordination, stated that although she receives all JIU reports, she only reviews and analyzes reports related to activities of the United Nations unless specifically requested to do so by other Directors in the Bureau. In addition, comments on JIU reports being considered by the specialized agencies and other U.N. bodies may be obtained from various working groups in the Bureau, commissions, private institutions, and other government agencies that have an interest in the U.N. organization. From

these comments, a position paper is prepared which forms the basis of statements by U.S. representatives to various committees or governing bodies. U.S. missions to the United Nations and the specialized agencies do not normally prepare position papers but may modify those originating with the Bureau, usually after telephone or telegraphic consultation. Some examples of U.S. positions follow.

In commenting on the annual report and on several other reports, in November 1979, a U.S. alternate delegate to the Fifth Committee strongly supported the JIU work.

> "* * *My Delegation finds this document is a straight forward and useful summary of the several studies the JIU undertook during the year July 1978 to June 1979, and of the major findings and recommendations of these reports. Each of these individual reports, Mr. Chairman, has been diligently prepared and contains sensible and welcome recommendations."

We asked the delegate if he or others in the U.S. Mission or State Department had analyzed all the reports as indicated in the above statement. Apparently they did not, but they believed they needed to support JIU. We noted that for some reports described in the JIU annual report, the United States did not prepare any position papers and therefore was probably not in a position to evaluate the reports or their recommendations.

One report on UNDP vehicles was listed as an agenda item for the June 1980 session of the Governing Council. An official in the Bureau told us, however, that no position paper was prepared for U.S. representatives, and he noted that the UNDP Administrator would act on the report recommendations. We are not sure that effective action is planned. UNDP Administrator comments on the report describe current policies and practices without indicating that any corrective actions have been taken, except to note that he is considering revisions of some procedures on vehicle use. We believe a detailed analysis of the report and the comments of the Administrator and the preparation of a position paper for U.S. representatives would have enabled the United States to support the work of JIU and would have also encouraged implementation of report recommendations. On some other reports noted by the U.S. delegate, such as the report on the Inter-Organization Board for Information Systems, the United States had previously prepared extensive position papers and, therefore, was in a position to effectively support JIU. We believe that to

effectively support JIU, all reports should be analyzed by knowledgeable personnel. When warranted, the United States should indicate weaknesses so that the Unit can avoid the same problem.

JIU REPORTS AND RELATED INFORMATION FORWARDED TO THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL AND THE CONGRESS

The President submitted 7 JIU reports to the Comptroller General, on August 28, 1979, stating that they were sent in accordance with Section 301(e)(3) of the Foreign Assistance Act. This first formal reporting did not contain any related information, on actions taken, as required under the act resulting from the JIU recommendations. On November 28, 1979, the Comptroller General received 11 JIU reports, 1 JIU note, and the U.N. Secretary General's comments on one report that was not furnished, and comments on one report that was provided. One report was in French.

At the completion of our fieldwork, we discussed the failure to submit the related information with the Deputy Assistant Secretary and the Managing Director of the Bureau, who noted that they were finding it difficult to supply the required information because of limited staff. They stated, however, that they would find ways to do so. They also stated that for every JIU report issued since 1978, the Congress and the Comptroller General would be provided information on the actions taken on the JIU recommendations by pertinent U.N. administrators or executive officers and governing bodies. In addition to this information, the State Department would provide U.S. positions regarding JIU recommendations. The Bureau shortly thereafter issued guidelines to implement section 301(e)(3), which stated that each Bureau Directorate or other appropriate unit is responsible for providing the Managing Director, International Management Staff, with documentary reports of any action taken by a legislative body or secretariat of a U.N. body on a JIU report within 3 weeks following the availability of such documents. In August 1980, the State Department submitted to the Comptroller General, a number of documents from U.N. organizations containing information on actions taken related to the JIU report recommendations. At the time of the preparation of the report, we were still waiting for the submission of the U.S. position taken on the JIU recommendations.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

The Department of State over the years has supported JIU and its work, but support can still be improved. To fully

support the work of the Unit, we believe every JIU report should be thoroughly analyzed and a position paper prepared for use by U.S. representatives to the various U.N. forums. The submission of actions taken on JIU recommendations to the Congress and the Comptroller General should help alleviate this problem.

To ensure that (1) the analysis of the reports is thoroughly done in a timely manner, (2) adequate support is provided to JIU, and (3) to ensure coordination and consistency of the U.S. position, a senior officer is needed to be directly responsible for U.S. support of JIU and its work. We therefore recommend that the Secretary of State specifically task a senior officer to ensure that adequate support and attention is provided to the work and reports of JIU.

JIU REPORTS AND NOTES ISSUED FROM JANUARY 1978 TO JUNE 1980

78-1	Programming and Evaluation in the United Nations	March 1978
78-1	Expanded Preliminary Note on a New System for Agency Support Costs	March 1978
78-2	Report on the United Nations Public Administration and Finance Programme, 1972-1976	March 1978
78-2	Note on Staff Welfare in the United Nations, some Specialized Agencies and IAEA	March 1978
78-3	Report on the Role Of Experts in Development Cooperation	March 1978
78-3	Agency Support Costs: Views of the Joint Inspection Unit on the report of the Administrator	December 1978
78-4	Second Report on the Implementation of the Personnel Policy Reforms Approved by the General Assembly in 1974	August 1978
78-5	Glossary of Evaluation Terms	November 1978
78-6	The Organization and Management of Drug Abuse Control Activities in the United Nations	November 1978
78-7	Report on the Inter-Organization Board for Information Systems	December 1978
79-1	Report on Regional Training Programmes in African Wildlife Management at Mweka and Garoua	January 1979
79-1	Note on the Arab Broadcasting and Television Training Centre (ABTTC) in Damascus (Syrian Arab Republic)	May 1979
79-2	Initial Guidelines for Internal Evaluation Systems of United Nations Organizations	February 1979

Report Number	Title	Date
79-3	The Latin American Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES)	February 1979
79-4	Programming and Budget Problems in UNICEF	March 1979
79-5	Medium-term Planning in the United Nations	March 1979
79-6	Report on the Use Of Vehicles by UNDP Field Offices and Projects	April 1979
79-7	Report on the Use of Consultants and Experts in the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)	June 1979
79-8	Report on the Arab Planning Institute (API)	May 1979
79-9	Report on the Arab Maritime Transport Academy	June 1979
79-10	Report on the United Nations Public Information Centres (UNICs)	June 1979
79-11	Report on the Higher Arab Postal Institute and the Arab Postal Union	June 1979
79-12	Report on the Information Services Unit Department of International Economic and Social Affairs	June 1979
79-13	Report on the African Training and Research Centre in Administration for Development (CAFRAD)	July 1979
79-14	Report on the use of Consultants and Experts under the Regular Programme in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)	November 1979

APPENDIX I

79-15	Report on the Regional Training Centre for Archivists (RTCA)	October 1979
79-16	Evaluation of Technical Cooperation Activities of the United Nations System in Sri Lanka Volume I	December 1979
79-16	Evaluation of Technical Cooperation Activities of the United Nations System in Sri Lanka Volume II	December 1979
79-17	The Commonwealth Caribbean Project for the Education and Training of Allied Health Personnel	December 1979
79-18	Report on the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)	December 1979
80-1	Report on the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP)	January 1980
80-1	Note on the Asian and Oceanic Postal Training School (AOPTS)	March 1980
80-2	Report on the Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development	January 1980
80-3	UNICEF: Planning and Programming for Children at the Country Level	March 1980
80-4	Status of Women in Professional Category and Above: A Progress Report	March 1980
80-5	Report on the FAO Regional Dairy Development and Training Centre for English-Speaking Countries in Africa (Naivasha, Kenya)	March 1980
80-6	UNICEF: The New Budget Format	April 1980

80-7	Evaluation of the Translation Process in the United Nations System	April 1980
80-8	Report on the African Regional Training Centre for Labour Administration (CRADAT)	May 1980

APPENDIX II

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Comptroller
Washington, D.C. 20520

October 1, 1980

Mr. J. Kenneth Fasick
Director
International Division
U.S. General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Fasick:

I am replying to your letter of August 25, 1980, which forwarded copies of the draft report: "Improving Management And Coordination In The United Nations System."

The enclosed comments on this report were prepared by the Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of International Organization Affairs.

We appreciate having had the opportunity to review and comment on the draft report. If I may be of further assistance, I trust you will let me know.

Sincerely,

Roger B. Feldman

Roger B. Feldman

Enclosure:
As stated

GAO DRAFT REPORT: "IMPROVING MANAGEMENT AND COORDINATION OF REVIEWS, INSPECTIONS AND EVALUATIONS IN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM"

The General Accounting Office has provided the Department of State an opportunity to comment on a draft of its proposed report, "Improving Management and Coordination of Reviews, Inspections and Evaluations in the United Nations System."

In essence, this draft report deals with the UN Joint Inspection Unit (JIU). The Department has strongly supported the development of this UN body and is pleased that the General Accounting Office is also supportive of its work and accomplishments. At the same time, we must stress the delicacy of this type of study of an international organization by an auditing arm of the U.S. Government or any other individual member state. In this connection, we would note the testimony of Comptroller General Staats before the Subcommittee on International Organizations and Movements, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, March 5, 1970, in which he stated, "I would like to emphasize that it is not the objective of the General Accounting Office to review the internal operations of the international organizations. Indeed, we, like other member governments, do not have authority to audit their activities."

We note that the GAO compared JIU reports with GAO reporting standards for the U.S. Government. The implication is that to the extent that GAO standards for the U.S. Government are not followed, the JIU work needs to be improved. An international organization, comprised as it is of many independent, sovereign states, cannot be expected to base its procedures on a manual of operations of a single member state.

We fully concur with the thrust of the draft report, i.e., that the JIU is doing good work but that it should be strengthened in every way possible. Indeed, the Department and its Missions in both Geneva and New York have consistently supported moves that were designed to increase the effectiveness of the Unit. We shall continue to do so in company with the great majority of member states who appreciate the contribution being made by the JIU to the UN system. We would point out, however, that moves to strengthen support for the JIU must reflect the realities of international institutions. For example, the GAO view that the JIU work program should be widely coordinated with a variety of

other bodies is inconsistent with the way the UN system works and with the JIU Statute which by design provides for the complete independence of the Unit.

The GAO report points out the need for highly qualified inspectors. The Department fully agrees and wishes to express its appreciation for the high quality and dedication of the members of the Unit and for the wide variety of financial, administrative, and management experience which they have brought to their assignment. The GAO suggestion that the General Assembly should debate the qualifications of inspectors before appointment raises the danger of increasing the political element in the selection process at the expense of the element of competence. We believe that the procedure set out in Article 3 of the JIU Statute for screening candidates through consultations among inter alia the President of the General Assembly, the President of ECOSOC, and the Chairman of the ACC should work against the possible appointment of unqualified individuals.

We believe the report could have benefited from more precise drafting and more rigorous analysis in support of its conclusions. The report includes selective paraphrasing of the JIU Statute, which can lead to a distortion of meaning, and too often generalizes across the UN system on the basis of a limited number of individual comments.

The report proposes an annual status report on all JIU recommendations. Unfortunately, the staff time and financial resources that would be involved were not quantified, nor were program priorities and end use. Perhaps most importantly, the GAO report in effect calls for the establishment of an Auditor General and enlarged UN Board of Auditors to exercise a vaguely formulated oversight of the JIU. The Department, and to the best of its knowledge all member states concerned with improved evaluation, believes firmly in the necessity of JIU independence. The other side of the coin is that the Department regards the external audit function as indispensable to the review of UN operations by the member states, a view which we are sure is equally firmly held by the GAO. We would not wish, therefore, to see the external audit function watered down by mixing it with program evaluation.

The above comments reflect our more serious concerns with the draft report. They do not cover all our reservations, nor do they deal with minor factual errors.

Marion V. Creekmore
Deputy Assistant Secretary
International Organization Affairs

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