

INADEQUATE UN OVERSIGHT

SECTION TABLE OF CONTENTS

OHR (Mis-)management

OHR (Mis-)management, II

Hodgepodge of rules

Staff performance ratings

Anti-harassment efforts

Career development

Support services

Mobility

Monitoring

Internal Oversight: The OIOS

Weak internal audit

OIOS: The (half-hearted) first five years

Poor succession, and the second five years

Investigation efforts: Is the OIOS a fig leaf?

Investigation efforts: Is the OIOS a fig leaf?, II

The third five years of the OIOS begin, in turmoil

External Oversight: The JIU

A small, outdated unit in a big, fast-changing world

Can a non-performing JIU go on forever?

Can a non-performing JIU go on forever?, II

Legislative and Other Oversight

The General Assembly, plus ...

External "expert" bodies

Corporate Accountability Struggles

Other Multilateral Accountability Struggles

Management accountability must be accompanied by oversight mechanisms to provide an independent check on performance and a firm stimulus to improvement. In the case of the UN, this includes the human resources department for personnel policy and accountability issues (OHRM), the internal oversight body (the

OIOS), and an external body (the JIU).

In addition, legislative oversight is provided by the General Assembly and its Fifth (Administrative and Budgetary) Committee, and various "expert bodies". Further, large modern organizations are becoming more and more alike, and it is useful to compare UN management accountability, oversight, and governance struggles with those of multinational corporations and with other major international organizations. Both groups have encountered severe accountability problems, but in general they seem to be responding better to these challenges than the UN.

These sections, unlike the chronological quotations in the performance problems section, combine excerpt quotes with brief IO Watch commentary and summaries, in order to piece together a "story line." This connective material is required primarily because the UN's lack of serious attention to management accountability, transparency, corruption, and oversight issues means that relevant "needles" must be dug out of the UN information "haystack" and then linked together. This situation of course underscores a long-standing UN aversion to proper performance, accountability, and reporting processes.

As was true for the management accountability struggles section, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) provides useful overall guidance. The OECD, again, is a group of 30 member countries committed to democratic government and the market economy. It has extensive publications and statistics activities; a global reach through active relationships with some 70 other countries, NGOs and civil society; and a prominent role in fostering good governance in the public service and in corporate activity (for further information, see <http://www.oecd.org/home/> .)

In 2001 the OECD and the Organization of American States (OAS) organized a forum in Brazil with the common aim of building accountable and transparent public administrations that serve their citizens' needs. An Annex in their report presented an OECD policy brief on building public trust. It described what makes an effective and comprehensive ethics management policy, and suggested policy directions to build its further use in public institutions, under the following headings:

- "Core values underpin public service
- Standards of behaviour set boundaries for conduct
- Putting values into effect starts with communication
- Ensuring integrity in daily management
- Monitoring compliance

Taking action against wrongdoing
Citizens trust public institutions if they know that
public offices are used for the public good ..."

"Annex I: OECD public management policy brief on building public trust: Ethics measures in OECD countries," in Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Public sector transparency and accountability: Making it happen, OECD, Paris, 2002, pp. 189-194.

On the last three of these OECD subheadings, the policy brief offered very useful overviews of principles which are discussed throughout this IO Watch section on accountability and oversight efforts:

"Monitoring compliance

Sound ethics management not only sets standards of behaviour but also monitors compliance with these standards. *Internal control is widely used to detect individual irregularities and systemic failures in OECD countries. ...*

Internal control is accompanied by independent scrutiny. This scrutiny keeps public servants accountable for their actions ... In virtually all countries, the legislative branch undertakes reviews of public service activities. Other common types of scrutiny range from external investigation by the Ombudsman or the Inspector General to specific judicial or ethics reviews. ...

Reporting misconduct by public servants is either required by law and/or facilitated by organizational rules in two-thirds of OECD countries. A growing need to protect whistleblowers in the public service is also visible across OECD countries. ... the most commonly provided safeguards are legal protection and anonymity. In two-thirds of OECD countries citizens have access to services, such as complaint procedures, an Ombudsman or Inspector General, and help desks or telephone lines, enabling them to expose wrongdoing by public servants."

"Annex I: OECD public management policy brief on building public trust: Ethics measures in OECD countries," in Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Public sector transparency and accountability: Making it happen, OECD, Paris, 2002, p. 192.

"Taking action against wrongdoing

"Taking action against violation of standards is the shared responsibility of managers and external investigative bodies. OECD countries recognize that disciplinary actions against a breach of public service standards should be taken within the organization where the breach occurred. All governments have developed a general framework for disciplinary procedures that both allows managers to impose timely and just sanctions and guarantees a fair process for the public servants. ...

Although public service managers have the primary responsibility for initiating disciplinary measures in their agencies in a timely manner, they may also receive assistance from specific external institutions. These external institutions are the primary instruments for investigating and prosecuting misconduct in the public service. These bodies have the power to bring suspected cases of corruption directly to court in all OECD countries. Moreover, two-thirds of countries have procedures and mechanisms to enable the public to signal wrongdoing to bodies exercising independent scrutiny on public service activities."

"Annex I: OECD public management policy brief on building public trust: Ethics measures in OECD countries," in Organisation for Economic

Cooperation and Development, Public sector transparency and accountability: Making it happen, OECD, Paris, 2002, p. 192. [emphasis added]

"Citizens trust public institutions if they know that public offices are used for the public good

Lessons from the OECD survey suggest the following steps for building trust in public institutions:

- Defining a clear mission for the public service. ...
- Safeguarding values while adapting to change. ...
- Empowering both public servants and citizens to report misconduct. ...
- Co-ordinating integrity measures: a precondition for success. ...
- Shifting emphasis from enforcement to prevention. ...
- Anticipating problems. ...
- Taking advantage of new technology. ...
-

...the following steps are necessary to build a consistent system of supportive mechanisms, namely the Ethics Infrastructure:

- Communicate and inculcate core values and ethical standards for public servants in order to provide clear guidance and advice to help solve ethical dilemmas.
- Promote ethical standards by preventing situations prone to conflict of interest and rewarding high standards of conduct through career development.
- Monitor compliance and report, detect and discipline wrongdoing."

"Annex I: OECD public management policy brief on building public trust: Ethics measures in OECD countries," in Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Public sector transparency and accountability: Making it happen, OECD, Paris, 2002, pp. 193-194.

Unfortunately, UN actions on these matters, as discussed in other sections of this archive and in the following subsections, fall woefully far short of meeting the basic criteria. The UN Secretariat has spent considerable time talking about them, but has not yet provided the professionalism and commitment required to ensure proper oversight to combat corruption and mismanagement, with severe negative consequences for the Organization.

The material presented below is only an initial compilation. IO Watch will be adding many more quotations in the future, and would like to add documented contributions suggested by present and former UN staff members and others interested (please see Contact IO Watch), to make this archive as full a record as possible.

(For an explanation of the nature, rationale, and parameters of the quoted excerpts found throughout this archive, please see the subsection on archive Rationale, Development, and Parameters .)

The following abbreviations of major UN organizations and entities appear throughout this archive:

ACABQ	Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions
ACC	Advisory Committee on Coordination (heads of UN system agencies, recently retitled "Chief Executives Board for Coordination")
Board of Auditors	of the United Nations
CPC	Committee for Programme & Coordination
DAM	Department of Administration and Management (recently retitled the Department of Management, DM)
DPI	Department of Public Information
DPKO	Department of Peace-keeping Operations
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
Fifth Committee	(Administrative and Budgetary) of the General Assembly
ICSC	International Civil Service Commission
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
OIOS	Office of Internal Oversight Services
OHRM	Office of Human Resources Management
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
WFP	World Food Programme