



# **JIU Review of the governance and oversight functions of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF and UN-Women**

Presentation to  
Annual Sessions

Inspector Conrod Hunte

18 June 2024

# Objectives of the review

- 1) To assess how the Boards execute their governance and oversight functions, including the role and capacity of relevant stakeholders;
- 2) To identify risks, gaps and opportunities among the current practices of the three Boards and the relevant governance and oversight best practices from within and outside the United Nations system, including relevant international standards;
- 3) To recommend specific actions intended to streamline and enhance the governance processes of the Boards.

# Key review milestones

## **February 2023**

- Chair of the JIU receives a request from Presidents of the three Executive Boards (from now on referred to as “Boards”)

## **April 2023**

- A formal agreement is signed between the JIU and the Presidents of the 3 Boards

## **June 2023**

- Full JIU team onboard

## **October 2023**

- JIU mid-term debrief of Board members

## **December 2023**

- English version of the final report is shared with the Presidents of the Boards and the Board secretariats

## **January 2024**

- Final JIU report is published on the JIU website

## **March / May 2024**

- Two full informal presentations were made to the Boards

# JIU approach and methodology

## **Review of relevant technical guidance and good practices**

- Technical guidance from various sources (e.g. COSO, guidance from various Institutes of Directors)
- Governance arrangements and practices of selected UN and non-UN organizations (chosen based on their ability to provide relevant comparative elements for the review) complemented by selected interviews (e.g. GAVI, World Bank, WFP)
- Other JIU reports

## **Observation and review of practices and documents of the 3 Boards/5 organizations**

- Desk review of current governance arrangements and practices of the 3 Boards
- Observations of selected sessions of the annual meetings of the 3 Boards in June 2023
- Survey of Board members (94 questions): 63 responses, 28-50 per cent of total number of Board members of each Executive Board
- Interviews of selected Board members, Executive Heads and key management and oversight staff of the 5 organizations
- Interviews of members of the Board of Auditors and of the ACABQ

## **Development of a tailored “good practice” Benchmark (JIU Benchmark)**

## **Gap analysis of current practices of the 3 Boards/5 organizations vs JIU Benchmark**

# JIU benchmark and overall conclusions

1. Improvements are needed with respect to all 6 JIU benchmark components
2. The majority of recommendations (10 formal and 21 informal) are applicable to all 3 Boards and 5 organizations

	JIU Benchmark component	Key elements covered	Number of formal recommendations
I	Board roles and responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role and responsibilities of the Board; Role and responsibilities of Board members;</li> <li>• Relationship with ECOSOC/GA/Secretary-General; Accountability to Stakeholders</li> </ul>	3
II	Board composition and structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board structure and composition; Committees of the Board;</li> <li>• Board Member Representation; Advise to the Board</li> </ul>	2
III	Board secretariat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role and responsibilities of Board Secretariat; Qualifications;</li> <li>• Capacity of the Secretariat function</li> </ul>	1
IV	Board meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effectiveness of meeting and decision-making processes;</li> <li>• Involvement and inclusion of stakeholders in Board meetings</li> </ul>	1
V	Board and oversight functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board responsibilities regarding internal audit, investigations, evaluation, Board of Auditors;</li> <li>• Interaction with related UN bodies, such as ACABQ, IAAC and JIU</li> </ul>	1
VI	Board and risk management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role of the Board in ERM; Required reporting</li> </ul>	1
	All components		1

# Final remarks

- **Maintaining the status quo is not a viable option for achieving adequate governance and oversight**
  - Board members must acknowledge their roles and responsibilities while making a commitment to undertake a thorough reassessment of current practices related to governance and oversight
  - Understanding the framework of accountability (to whom and for what) remains fundamental
  - Board members should remember that governance processes extend to all facets of the organization/entity (e.g. for UNDP it also includes the activities of UNV, UNMPTF, UNCDF, etc.)
  - Board members should remain alert to the peculiar inherent risks of the different organizations
- **It is important to adopt a holistic approach:** failure to apply a well-rounded approach can lead to an increase of the risks faced by the organizations
  - E.g. any changes in current Financial Rules and Regulations need to address the risks identified in this report*
- Board members should leverage the fact that many of them are members of more than one Board and should leverage these synergies
- The Inspector encourages the Presidents of the Boards to liaise with the President of the Executive Board of the World Food Programme to identify any potential synergies between the two review processes.

# Next Steps - Suggestions for some immediate changes

- Positive signals from recent Board meetings have been observed already (e.g. information on risks, and interaction with Board of Auditors)
- In line with Recommendation 10 of the JIU report: *“Boards should create an ad-hoc committee to assess both formal and informal recommendations arising from this review and prepare an action plan to address and implement them, including setting clear target dates and having regular reporting on the progress of implementation.”*
- The table below includes some suggestions for changes that could be implemented in the short term whilst the other JIU formal recommendations are discussed and addressed:

	JIU Benchmark component	Actions
I	EB roles and responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be very familiar with the current Board Rules of Procedure, including the role of ECOSOC.</li> <li>• Be very familiar with all the delegations of authority of the Executive Heads</li> </ul>
II	EB composition and structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Form Committees of the Board to support discussions on the most technical issues</li> <li>• Request Board secretariats to prepare a joint general Governance induction for all Board members</li> </ul>
III	EB secretariat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that Board secretaries and their teams have adequate technical expertise</li> </ul>
IV	EB meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare a self-assessment checklist based on the JIU Benchmark and start using it to reflect on the effectiveness of meetings</li> <li>• Reach out to colleagues in the field for evidence on the activities of the organization, which can be leveraged when reviewing documents presented by management to the Board</li> </ul>
V	EB and oversight functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Request the presence of Executive Head during all the oversight presentations, so as to be able to discuss findings and recommendations directly with them</li> <li>• Increase the time allocated for questions by the Board to the Heads of oversight and to management.</li> </ul>
VI	EB and risk management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask for the Board agenda to include an overall presentation on key risks and mitigating actions at least once a year.</li> </ul>



Thank You - [www.unjiu.org](http://www.unjiu.org)

Inspector Conrod Hunte - [hunte@un.org](mailto:hunte@un.org)