



COUNCIL

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Update on the Management and Administration Review of FAO by the Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations

Executive summary

FAO has a long-standing fruitful collaboration with the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) and is pleased to confirm its assurance of full participation in, and cooperation with all aspects of the Unit's reviews.

FAO also contributes proactively to the preparation of UN Secretary-General comments to reports of the Joint Inspection Unit, in close collaboration with the Chief Executives Board for Coordination which consolidates the system-wide comments to such reports.

The Finance Committee at its 191st Session received an oral update from management on FAO's activities and collaboration with the Joint Inspection Unit, as well as background information on the deferment of the 2021 FAO Management and Administration Review as mutually agreed between FAO and the JIU. This document summarizes the information presented to the Finance Committee.

FAO management confirms its full commitment to undertaking and supporting the JIU Management and Administration Review of FAO as soon as a mutually convenient date is agreed with the JIU.

Suggested action by the Council

The Council is invited to take note of the information provided in this document.

Queries on the substantive content of this document may be addressed to:

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I. Introduction

1. The Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) included a Management and Administration Review (MAR) of FAO in its programme of work for 2021 as presented to the United Nations General Assembly on 19 January 2021 (document A/75/34). The General Assembly took “*note with appreciation of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit for 2020 and programme of work for 2021,*” as reflected in resolution 75/270 dated 16 April 2021 (A/RES/75/270).
2. The Report of the Joint Inspection Unit for 2021 and programme of work for 2022 (document A/76/34), paragraph 5, informs as follows: “*The Unit draws the attention of legislative organs to the review of management and administration in FAO, which had been included in the programme of work for 2021. Subsequent to the initiation of work on the review, the Director General of FAO requested that the review be deferred to spring 2024. Following consultation with FAO to examine other options, and after consideration of the request by the inspectors, the Unit decided to suspend the review with immediate effect. The Director General of FAO was informed that the Unit was unable to commit to his proposed date for the review but would consider the resumption thereof in future work programmes.*”
3. On 19 May 2022, FAO provided an oral update to the 191st Session of the Finance Committee on the rescheduling of the 2021 FAO MAR by the JIU. This document summarizes the information provided to the Finance Committee, including background on the deferment of the FAO MAR as mutually agreed between FAO and the JIU and additional context to the paragraph included in the JIU Report for 2021, quoted above.

II. Background on JIU

A. Joint Inspection Unit (JIU)

4. The Joint Inspection Unit was established in 1966 by the United Nations General Assembly with the unique mandate as the only independent external oversight body of the UN system. Its mandate is to look at system-wide cross-cutting issues, help to secure management and administrative efficiency, and promote greater coordination between UN agencies and other internal and external oversight bodies. JIU identifies best practices, proposes benchmarks and facilitates information-sharing throughout all the organizations of the UN system that have adopted its Statute.

B. JIU Participating Organizations (POs)

5. The JIU has 28 Participating Organizations and FAO has a long history of fruitful association with the JIU. The Organization contributes 3.7 percent of the Unit’s yearly costs, or approximately USD 0.25 million annual contribution derived from FAO’s UN cost sharing arrangements for inter-agency coordination mechanisms.

C. FAO-JIU Secretariat

6. The Secretariat of the JIU is located in the Office of the Director, Strategy, Programme and Budget (OSP) and the Director OSP (formerly the Director PBE) has been the FAO-JIU Focal Point since its inception. The Director OSP is also the Secretary of the Oversight Advisory Committee, thus ensuring a coordinated approach for these functions.

D. FAO’s activities in support of the JIU’s functions

7. FAO works closely with the JIU in multiple and multi-faceted ways in support of their reviews. Among others, FAO:
 - a) attends preliminary meetings;
 - b) provides background documentation;
 - c) completes questionnaires;
 - d) gives inputs to the terms of reference of JIU reviews;
 - e) arranges and supports visits of JIU inspectors to FAO;

- f) participates in extensive high-level meetings with visiting Inspectors;
- g) reviews and analyses the JIU draft reports; and
- h) contributes to the preparation of Secretary-General comments for the JIU reports, in close collaboration with the UN System Chief Executives Board Secretariat.

8. Most JIU reviews are thematic and look at cross-cutting issues across the United Nations system. At any point in time, FAO is involved in multiple reviews. These reviews require active involvement and significant time commitment by FAO senior staff, according to the theme.

9. The JIU appreciates FAO's contributions to their reviews, and the FAO-JIU Secretariat has frequent and regular exchanges with the JIU Secretariat and enjoys excellent relationships and factual collaboration.

III. FAO Management and Administration Review

10. The JIU periodically carries out Management and Administration Reviews of Participating Organizations, with the JIU generally undertaking one or two MARs per year. The previous MAR of FAO was undertaken in 2002 (documents JIU/REP/2002/8 and CL 124/INF/14).

11. At the end of 2018, the JIU approached FAO regarding programming another MAR. Given that 2019 was a transition year for the leadership of FAO, both sides agreed that 2019 was not ideal but that early 2020 could offer a good opportunity.

12. Following the arrival of the Director-General in 2019, he was apprised of the possibility for a JIU MAR of FAO taking place in 2020. The Director-General welcomed this, noting that it would offer the JIU's independent lens at the beginning of the transition process from the previous administration to the new one in assessing the managerial, administrative and governance arrangements required to deliver FAO's mandate.

13. When the JIU published its 2020 Programme of Work, FAO learned that a FAO MAR was not included despite the discussions that had taken place in this regard.

14. The JIU subsequently suggested to FAO that the MAR would be included in its Programme of Work for 2021 and informal discussions took place in mid-2020 between the JIU and FAO to prepare for a 2021 MAR. The reason for this early preparation was so that the review could start quickly in 2021 to still provide input at the beginning of the transition process, as discussed and agreed previously with the JIU.

15. In January 2021, the JIU communicated to FAO the inclusion of the MAR in the 2021 JIU Programme of Work. FAO welcomed this first concrete step and looked forward to the early commencement of the review to feed into the planning and transformation processes already underway.

16. In June 2021, the JIU communicated that they planned to start the review in early July 2021. FAO at that time provided the JIU with background documentation on the Strategic Framework 2022-31, Medium Term Plan 2022-25 and Programme of Work and Budget 2022-23, *inter alia*, to facilitate the start of its review.

17. At the end of June 2021, the JIU communicated postponement of the start date to September 2021.

18. At the end of September 2021, the JIU informed that they could not start the review before the beginning of November 2021.

19. At the end of November 2021, FAO received the first official communication from the JIU on the FAO MAR. The memo indicated that "data collection/research and a desk review had started in earnest". FAO understands this to refer to the JIU's review of the planning documents that FAO had sent earlier in the year. The memo also indicated that the timeline and draft Terms of Reference of the MAR would be communicated in due course.

20. At this point, the Organization realized that, regretfully, the JIU MAR for FAO could not meet the original purpose agreed in 2019, namely to provide an independent lens at the beginning of the transition process.
21. FAO also considered that a review which would effectively take place in 2022 was too early to comment on the impact of changes introduced through the Strategic Framework, Medium Term Plan and Programme of Work and Budget approved by Members in 2021, including organizational transformations, the breaking down of silos, cutting layers of management, digitalizing FAO, and engaging in an efficiency and effectiveness agenda.
22. On 13 December 2021, FAO therefore proposed to the JIU to defer the MAR to Spring 2024 to allow FAO the opportunity to take concrete actions to implement the recently approved Programme of Work. FAO also noted that it wished to ensure that both FAO's and JIU's efforts invested in this exercise would be conducive to useful and practicable results.
23. On 14 January 2022, the JIU responded that based on the information presented, the meeting of Inspectors decided to suspend the review with immediate effect and to assess its viability in future programmes of work. The JIU also noted that it was not in a position to commit to FAO's proposed dates to resume the review, at this point in time. The JIU during this period also asked FAO, through its JIU focal point, if Autumn 2023 would be amenable, which FAO confirmed would be.
24. The JIU to date has not communicated when it expects to undertake the FAO MAR.
25. FAO reiterates its full commitment to undertaking and supporting the JIU MAR as soon as a mutually convenient date is agreed with the Joint Inspection Unit.