Review of Management and Administration in the United Nations Environment Programme

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Joint Inspection Unit of the
United Nations System

11 September 2025

Subcommittee meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives

16 September 2025

171st meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives

Content

I. Background of the review

- The review was included in the **2024 Programme of Work** of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU).

- **Timing is optimal** as:

(1) the review is done after the approval and first 2 years of implementation of a new delivery model (policy issued in 2022) which impacted the operational approach of the organization.

(2) it coincided with the preparation of the medium-term strategy for the period 2026–2029.

(3) it is published ahead of the 7th session of the United Nations Environment Assembly.

- The review team appreciated the **collaboration and responsiveness** of UNEP management and the **solution-oriented approach** of the management response to the JIU review.

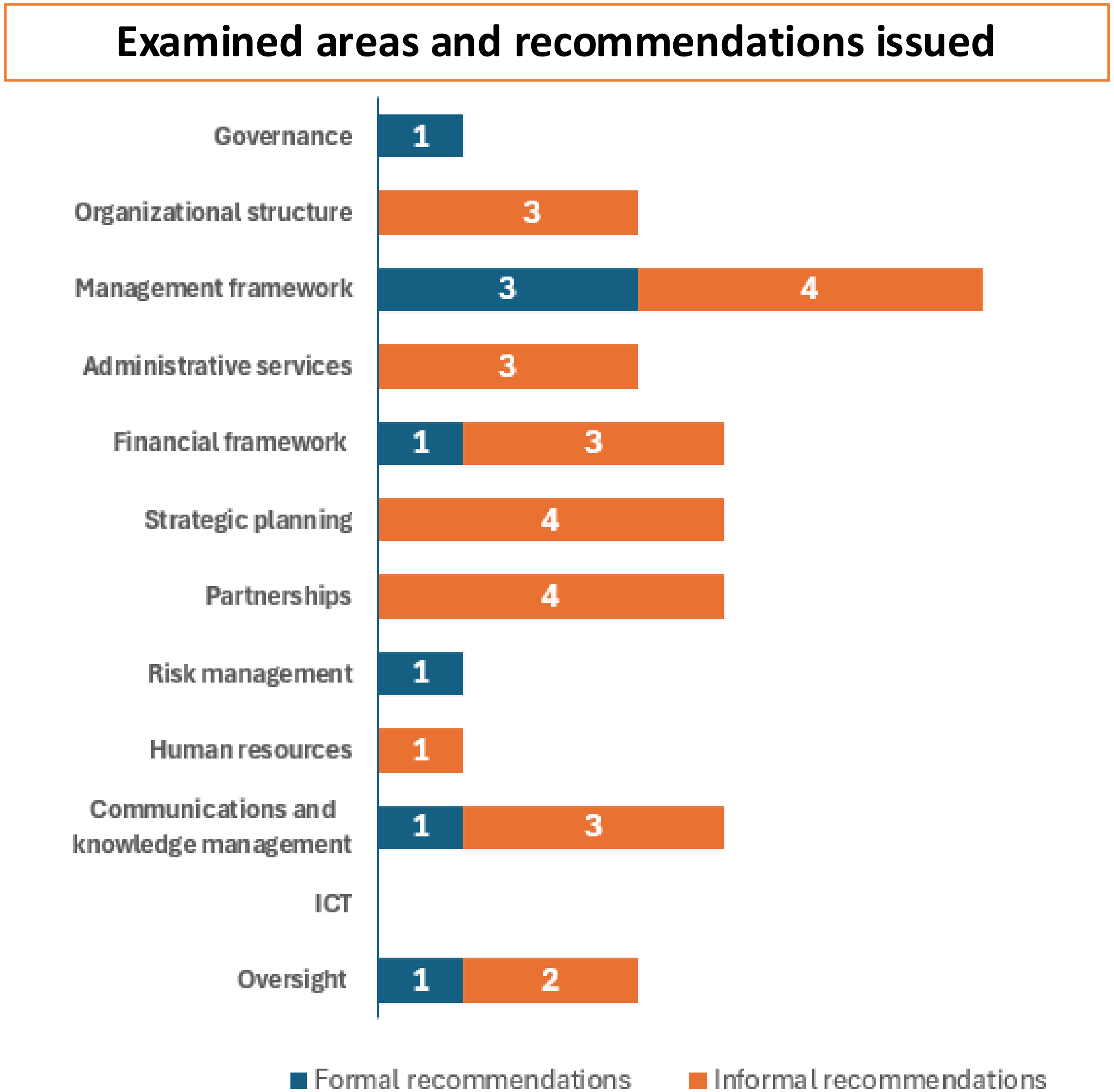
II. General information (1/2)

Review start September 2024 → Review completion June 2025 → Review publication August 2025 → Presentation to CPR September 2025 → UNEA December 2025

- After the start of the review, the **UN80 Initiative** was launched; this had implications on both on the content of the JIU review and on the format of its outputs.

- To abide with **new editorial and translation instructions** of the UN Secretariat for cost saving, JIU produced 3 outputs for this review:
  - ❖ JIU/REP/2025/1: A report (10,700 words, translated in all official UN languages, all available on the JIU website)
  - ❖ JIU/REP/2025/1 [Expanded]: An expanded report (33,000 words, available in English only)
  - ❖ A supplementary paper (containing annexes to the expanded report, available in English only, on JIU website).

II. General information (2/2)



Formal Recommendations:

Three for governing bodies - one addressed to the UNEA and two to the CPR.

Five for the Executive Director of UNEP.

The following slides contain a presentation of findings and recommendations by examined area.

III. (1) Governance

Findings	• **UNEA sessions** focus more on programmatic issues, with limited time allocated to management and administration issues • The **mandate of the CPR** was defined and refined by a parent body (the Governing Council) that had a narrower membership and more frequent, longer meetings than the Environment Assembly • CPR has undergone a **consensual process for review** in recent years, but the process didn't include procedural guidance on the decision-making process, which needed to be clarified at a later stage • Various **agenda points of CPR formal meetings** are, in many occasions, deferred to future Committee meetings or downgraded to informal meetings of the CPR. • **CPR membership accreditation** has increased, but it still faces challenges, when referring to on-site representation especially. • The **capacity of the Committee** to request the UNEP secretariat to undertake corrective measures in **between sessions of the Environment Assembly** requires further attention. • **Monitoring arrangements of decisions** of the CPR are not yet fully mature. • Annual orientation sessions offered since 2017 by the UNEP secretariat to accredited members to the Committee of Permanent Representatives is a good practice.
Formal recommendation	Rec 1: The United Nations Environment Assembly should, at its eighth session at the latest, **clarify the mandate and role of the Committee of Permanent Representatives** as its intersessional body and examine the frequency of its formal meetings, as appropriate.
Informal recommendation	None.

III. (2) Organizational structure

Findings	• The **Secretary-General's Bulletin** (2006) is outdated and no longer reflects UNEP's current setup. • Overall, in UNEP, the **ratio** between directors and staff was 1:21, while the ratio between staff at the P-5 level and other staff was 1:10. Significant variations from these average ratios were observed when looking across technical divisions and particularly across regional offices. • Nearly half of UNEP's secretariat staff (47%) are **posted away from headquarters**. • The **rationale underpinning restructuring decisions** are explained in memorandums issued by the Executive Director. Recently, UNEP secretariat gathered all such memorandums in a single repository made available in the internal sharing platform (weCollaborate). • **Placement of certain functions** may need further analysis, especially for the oversight functions and strategic planning processes. • UNEP collaborates with a growing **network of centres** to complement and leverage its expertise, but the legal status of such entities requires further analysis and clarification. • **Coordination and cooperation among units** and offices throughout UNEP was marked as a clear area for improvement by respondents to the staff survey.
Formal recommendation	None.
Informal recommendation	(1) Update the Secretary General's bulletin containing UNEP structure; (2) Review the ratios between management and staff positions; (3) Clarify the legal status of collaborating centers;

III. (3) Management framework

Findings	• All 10 UNEP **management and thematic committees** operated under defined terms of reference. However, the work of the thematic committees was relatively unclear for more than half of staff responding to the JIU survey. • The **Senior Management Teams** convenes in weekly meetings and during biannual retreats. At the time of the review, decisions taken in weekly meetings were systematically tracked and monitored (a good practice), those from the retreats were monitored on an ad-hoc basis. • The **Budget Steering Committee** evolved in terms of its structure (less members), improved timing of decisions (issued before the start of the budgetary year for the first time in 2024) and criteria used for allocation of funds (from 2025, programme support costs will no longer be distributed based on historical allocations). • The time planned internally for **preparation of budgetary requests** was rather short (10 days for the last exercise) and the **minutes of the meetings** did not include the information of post distribution by division/office before and after the decisions of the committee. • In relation to the **three lines model**, the second line (management function) was assessed as only partially effective due mostly to risk management processes which need further strengthening.

III. (3) Management framework

Findings	• The **delegation of authority framework** needs reinforcement in terms of: (1) clarifying the definition and instances of approval/authorization versus clearance of processes; (2) strengthening the compliance with the reporting requirements for the delegation holders. • A significant operational shift for UNEP came in 2022 with the adoption of the One UNEP Delivery for Better Collaboration and Country Support Policy. However, there was a **lack of practical implementation guidelines** of the new policy which led to different interpretations of the model's application across divisions and offices. • There was **no monitoring framework for the delivery model**, which makes it difficult to quantify whether UNEP has progressed towards achieving its intended results • The internal approach to accountability and organizational monitoring (i.e. the process of quarterly business review) is a good practice.

III. (3) Management framework

Formal recommendations	Rec 2: The Executive Director should conclude, by the end of 2025, **the review of the UNEP delegation of authority policy** and framework and update it, as appropriate, in the context of the implementation of the Policy for One UNEP Delivery for Better Collaboration and Country Support. Rec 3: The Executive Director should issue, by the end of 2025, a **corporate guidance document** to support the consistent implementation of the **Policy for One UNEP Delivery** for Better Collaboration and Country Support across the organization Rec 4: The Committee of Permanent Representatives should request the Executive Director to present in 2026 a **monitoring framework for the Policy for One UNEP Delivery** for Better Collaboration and Country Support that would enable the assessment of progress against expected results
Informal recommendations	(1) Strengthen monitoring of senior-level decisions stemming from biannual retreats (beyond the weekly meetings); (2 and 3) Improve transparency and planning of the work of the Budget Steering Committee; (4) Periodically review indicators used internally in the quarterly business review process.

III. (4) Administrative services

Findings	• **UNON** provides to UNEP financial services, human resources management services, central support services and procurement. Most of these **support services** are in fact integrated processes and involve UNON, the UNEP Corporate Services Division and administrative and financial teams in other UNEP divisions and offices (**three-tiered model**). Both UNEP and UNON stakeholders found it challenging to properly implement actions within such integrated end-to-end processes. • The **implementation of integrated processes** can be seen as challenging also due to different time zones, reporting lines, and coordination challenges. • The **clarity of guidelines for administrative processes and their efficient implementation** received low ratings from most respondents to JIU surveys, particularly for the areas of human resources management, financial management and procurement. • UNEP is providing administrative and financial management support services to 15 **multilateral environmental agreements** and 2 **action plans** secretariats. While these secretariats also have their own established administrative and financial team, there is room for improvement in terms of service coordination and streamlining and UNEP has undertaken several initiatives in this regard recently.
Formal recommendation	None.
Informal recommendation	(1) Functional review of administrative and financial services within UNEP. (2) Review the UNON-UNEP process-architecture of services. (3) Monitor the implementation of the memorandum regarding strengthening support to UNEP-administered MEA secretariats.

III. (5) Financial framework

Findings	• The **extension of the programme of work and budget** 2022-2023 to 2024-2025 (as decided by UNEA in 2022) meant that the representatives of Member States provided formal inputs only once in four years on the operative directions and budget of the secretariat. • UNEP budget and income is **heavily reliant (97%) on extra-budgetary resources**. • **Environment Fund** ($100 millions per year) is a core component for the budget and income of the organization but is has never reached its budgeted amount. Almost half of Member States did not make any contribution to the Environment Fund in any given year. • The online database indicating in real time the status of the contributions of Member States to the Environment Fund is a good practice. • **High dependence on earmarked** (43% of 2022-2023 income) **and global funds** (41% of 2022-2023 income) may pose risks for the organization's financial management and strategic focus. • The **Planetary Funds** (established in 2022) aim to broaden funding base of softly earmarked resources, but results are limited so far. • The **resource mobilization strategy** (2021) is outdated and not aligned with the 2022 delivery model. Situation of donors being approached by various teams, with limited coordination between the requests put forward should be avoided.
Formal recommendation	Rec 5: The Executive Director should review and update, as appropriate, the current **resource mobilization strategy** and present it to the Committee of Permanent Representatives in 2026
Informal recommendation	(1) Avoid extending the duration of the biennial programme of work and budget. (2) Analyze the appropriate funding proportion from global funds mechanism. (3) Create an organization-wide client relations management system.

III. (6) Strategic planning

Findings	• Information on **subprogramme deliverables** is different between the content of the section 14 of the annual programme budget and the biennial programme of work and budget document. • The introduction of the **"programmatic approach"** and it 13 programme coordination projects within the frame of the 7 subprogrammes created overlapping layers, certain duplications of management responsibilities and complexity in their implementation. • Information on the **implementation of programme coordination projects** is not currently included in the UNEP annual programme performance reports. • Regarding **UNEP's performance framework**, there is a lack of an established methodology for calculating baselines, lack of definition of indicators and the use of highly aggregated indicators with multiple units of measurement. Also, the lack of impact indicators in the medium-term strategy 22-25 limits the ability to evaluate the results achieved on a medium-term basis. • **Oversight/control capacity at project level** requires reinforcement. • There are **multiple reporting mechanisms** and documents produced by UNEP, generating a high workload for various teams within the organization, while: manual input of data is still required in some cases, qualitative indicators are not reported on clearly.
Formal recommendation	None.
Informal recommendation	(1) Present the same information on subprogramme deliverables across all planning documents. (2) Strengthen the performance framework of the organization (review the indicators themselves and produce methodologies). (3) Include impact indicators in medium-term strategies. (4) Report more clearly on achievements from qualitative indicators.

III. (7) Partnership

Findings	• Revised partnership policy approved in 2024, major changes as compared to the previous policy from 2011, transition until mid-2025. • Challenges: due diligence process in the context of a risk-based approach, notably towards non-performing partners; partnership terminations. • The management of partnerships in UNEP involved the use of three different online platforms; this setup hindered the ability to create a global repository of partners • At the end of 2024: 1,300 partnerships active, 3,600 registered partners. • Increasing focus on philanthropy, cautious approach with private sector. • The United Nations Environment Management Group, a coordination body established in 2001 tasked with identifying and coordinating approaches to international environmental matters, is not integrated within the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) machinery, unlike its predecessor the Environment Coordination Board. • In 2022, only 5 per cent of UNEP partnership agreements were with United Nations entities and, among those agreements, two thirds were with four entities. Joint programmes or joint projects represented an even smaller percentage of engagement, but this information is not currently centralized.
Formal recommendation	None.
Informal recommendation	(1) Record centrally the terminated partnerships. (2) Clarify certain aspects in the philanthropic engagement strategy. (3) Consider potentially adding a new reporting line of the Environment Management Group to the CEB. (4) Strengthen the approach to partnering with other UN entities.

III. (8) Risk management

Findings	• The **Enterprise Risk Management framework** was endorsed in 2021, however the current framework is still not yet fully mature. • The **Enterprise Risk Management Committee** met only once since its creation in 2021. • **No risk appetite statement** developed at this stage. • **Risk management at project level** is more mature. • The corporate **risk management function** is assigned to a small team with part-time focus on these specific tasks • Across the organizations, the **focal points for risk management** are mostly junior or assistant level staff. • Risk management is **not a traditional agenda item** of CPR meetings or UNEA sessions.
Formal recommendation	Rec 6: The Executive Director should **designate, by the end of 2025, a Chief Risk Officer** to accelerate and coordinate measures aimed at strengthening the mechanisms, tools, systems and procedures for enterprise risk management and ensure their effective implementation at all levels of the organization, including the functioning of the Enterprise Risk Management Committee.
Informal recommendation	None.

III. (9) Human resources management

Findings	• **No UNEP-specific HR strategy**; following the UN Secretariat People Strategy 22–25. • Staff see **HR management processes among the least efficient.** The latest internal audit conducted by OIOS on these issues was issued in 2019. • More than 95 per cent compliance among staff members in 2024 regarding the completion of the **mandatory trainings**. • More clarity is needed in the **UNEP learning needs analysis**. The completion of courses offered via the UNEP Corporate Academy (an online training platform developed by UNEP secretariat) is currently at 35 per cent and should be boosted. The learning offer should be enriched to offer also technical and substantive topics, such as scientific writing and resource mobilization. • The **work-life balance** satisfaction among staff has slightly declined compared with the latest UNEP pulse survey from 2022 (52% of staff are currently satisfied). • **Workforce expanded** by 38% in 4 years (mostly due to increase in the number of affiliate personnel, that almost doubled over the period). • The comprehensive information presented to the Committee of Permanent Representative on financial and human management matters related to UNEP staff is a good practice. **Affiliate personnel statistics** are not presented to governing bodies. • As of February 2025, all job openings of one year or more are advertised as **FTA-limited appointments** due to budget constraints, but risk of reduced oversight in recruitment (the selection process does not include an external review by a central review body). • **Gender balance**: 62% female staff; balance from the perspective of both genders to be sought. • **Geographic diversity** improved but has to be assessed on a long-term horizon.
Formal recommendation	None.
Informal recommendation	(1) Report data on affiliate personnel to the CPR.

III. (10) Communication and knowledge management

Findings	• **Need to better quantifying the** **outcomes and impact of communication** efforts and to strengthen the oversight on project-level communications. Often measurement of reach and impact is limited to downloads and media mentions. • **Multiple coordination layers for communication activities**, including for the communication activities within individual projects. • **Knowledge management strategy** outdated (last 2014–2017). • **Lack of centralized knowledge-sharing platforms**, inconsistent knowledge management practices, and reliance on project- or division-specific systems. • **Publication planning** not aligned with delivery capacities, but corrective measures were undertaken in the last years.
Formal recommendation	Rec 7: The Executive Director should approve, by the end of 2026, a comprehensive **strategy to support an organization-wide approach** to knowledge management and knowledge-sharing.
Informal recommendation	(1) Strengthen the tracking tools for the use of publications and communication products. (2) Conduct a corporate evaluation of the communication function. (3) Assess the results of the measures taken to better align publication approval with release capacity.

III. (11) Information and communications technology

Findings	• **Limited interoperability** of internal platforms and, consequently, the duplication of work for reporting purposes • **Difficulties in recruiting** for Professional positions and retaining international staff with the necessary ICT skills and experience in the ICT section of corporate services. • The **coordination** between the digital transformations subprogramme and the work of the ICT section in corporate services is primarily at the working level but will be reinforced through revised reporting lines. • **Website security** not fully aligned with UN Secretariat standards.
Formal recommendation	None.
Informal recommendation	None.

III. (12) Oversight

Findings	• **Implementation rates** of OIOS recommendations is 88%, BoA only 42% (annual performance report 2022-2023). **Acceptance rate** is not reported on. • The **UNEA never discussed JIU reports** in the past, not even the system-wide review on environmental governance in the United Nations system. • The work of **the Evaluation Office** is mainly focused on project-level assessments with only few strategic/cross-cutting evaluations produced in the last years. • **No impact studies nor impact evaluations** reported by the Evaluation Office since 2020. • **Oversight findings are rarely discussed in formal CPR meetings** as the topic often gets postponed due to lack of time for its discussion. When discussed it's mostly about statistics, not the findings themselves. • **Compliance tracking of management responses** to evaluations expected to be enhanced through the UNITE for Evaluations introduced in June 2025.
Formal recommendation	Rec 8: The Committee of Permanent Representatives should request the Evaluation Office to consider the inclusion of a **higher number of strategic or corporate evaluations** in its annual work programme and to report back on their findings and conclusions
Informal recommendation	(1) Invite OIOS to present their reports to the Committee of Permanent Representatives. (2) Continue to improve the implementation rates of recommendations from oversight bodies and add acceptance rates in UNEP annual reporting.

III. (13) Full list of formal recommendations

Examined area	Recommendation	To be acted upon by
Governance	Rec 1: The United Nations Environment Assembly should, at its eighth session at the latest, **clarify the mandate and role of the Committee of Permanent Representatives** as its intersessional body and examine the frequency of its formal meetings, as appropriate.	The Environment Assembly
Management	Rec 2: The Executive Director should conclude, by the end of 2025, the **review of the UNEP delegation of authority policy and framework** and update it, as appropriate, in the context of the implementation of the Policy for One UNEP Delivery for Better Collaboration and Country Support.	The Executive Director
Management	Rec 3: The Executive Director should issue, by the end of 2025, a **corporate guidance document** to support the consistent implementation of the **Policy for One UNEP Delivery** for Better Collaboration and Country Support across the organization	The Executive Director
Management	Rec 4: The Committee of Permanent Representatives should request the Executive Director to present in 2026 a **monitoring framework for the Policy for One UNEP Delivery** for Better Collaboration and Country Support that would enable the assessment of progress against expected results	The Committee of Permanent Representatives

III. (13) Full list of formal recommendations

Examined area	Recommendation	To be acted upon by
Financial framework	Rec 5: The Executive Director should **review and update**, as appropriate, the current **resource mobilization strategy** and present it to the Committee of Permanent Representatives in 2026	The Executive Director
Risk management	Rec 6: The Executive Director should **designate, by the end of 2025, a Chief Risk Officer** to accelerate and coordinate measures aimed at strengthening the mechanisms, tools, systems and procedures for enterprise risk management and ensure their effective implementation at all levels of the organization, including the functioning of the Enterprise Risk Management Committee.	The Executive Director
Communications and knowledge management	Rec 7: The Executive Director should approve, by the end of 2026, a comprehensive **strategy to support an organization-wide approach to knowledge management and knowledge-sharing.**	The Executive Director
Oversight	Rec 8: The Committee of Permanent Representatives should request the Evaluation Office to consider the inclusion of a **higher number of strategic or corporate evaluations** in its annual work programme and to report back on their findings and conclusions	The Committee of Permanent Representatives

IV. Examples of internal changes observed in UNEP during the JIU review process

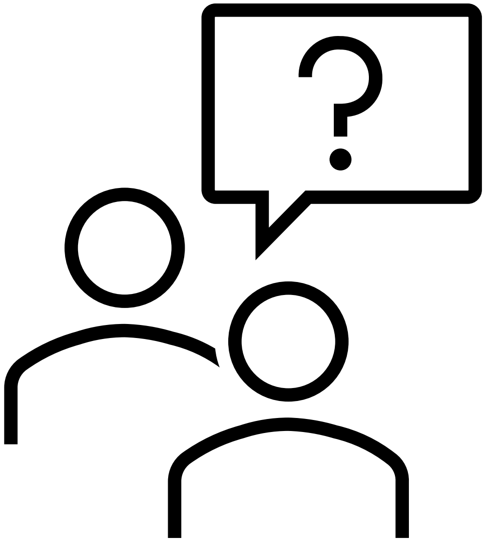
Management side

- Review/approval of terms of reference for various management committees
- Plan announced in March 2025 to have a review of the delegation of authority framework in 2025

Administrative side

- Announcement of an organization-wide functional review in March 2025
- Process simplification project announced in April 2025
- Amendment of the Memorandum of Understanding with UNON in May 2025
- Updates of job descriptions for consultancies with additional explanations of contractual conditions

V. Questions & answers



Thank you for your attention

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