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Office of Inspector General  
United States Department of State

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Office of Inspections

January 2026

# **Review of the Bureau of International Organization Affairs' Efforts To Advance United Nations Management Reform**

DOMESTIC OPERATIONS

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## SUMMARY OF REVIEW

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The Office of Inspector General (OIG) reviewed the Bureau of International Organization Affairs' (IO Bureau) efforts from January 2017 to January 2025 to advance management reform at the United Nations (UN) in three areas.<sup>1</sup> Those areas were governance, transparency, and accountability; cost containment; and advocacy for U.S. citizen representation in UN agencies. OIG found that the IO Bureau advocated for UN management reform and generally met Department of State (Department) standards for strategic direction and management of its reform program. However, although the IO Bureau defined goals and objectives related to governance, transparency, and accountability in the UN system,<sup>2</sup> the IO Bureau did not have a process to monitor and evaluate its activities consistently. Instead, the IO Bureau relied on the institutional knowledge of individual employees who oversaw the status of reform efforts within their portfolios. As a result, the IO Bureau struggled to identify practical performance indicators to track progress and measure outcomes.

As the United States reassesses its involvement in and its funding of international organizations, and the Department undertakes staffing reductions and operational restructuring, the IO Bureau is facing a changing operating environment. Consequently, it will be important for the bureau to develop a systematic and consistent approach to monitor and evaluate its UN management reform goals and objectives, especially those concerning governance, transparency, and accountability. Such actions will help the IO Bureau make informed decisions, develop innovative ways to cope with reduced budgets, prioritize resources, and ensure alignment with the administration's policies. OIG made one recommendation to improve the IO Bureau's ability to monitor and evaluate its efforts to advance UN management reforms related to governance, transparency, and accountability. In its comments on the draft report, the IO Bureau concurred with the recommendation. OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The Department's response to the recommendation and OIG's reply can be found in the Recommendation section of this report. The bureau's formal written response is reprinted in its entirety in Appendix B.

## BACKGROUND

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Calls for UN management reform by the United States, other UN members, and interested observers date back decades and have generally related to transparency, accountability, and cost containment. At the beginning of his term in 2017, UN Secretary-General António Guterres implemented a reform plan that, in part, sought to decentralize decision-making authority, simplify and streamline policy and processes, and strengthen transparency and accountability.

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<sup>1</sup> The United States joined the UN in 1945 by ratifying the UN Charter, an international treaty which created the UN. U.S. participation in and funding of the UN is authorized through the United Nations Participation Act of 1945. Funding authorization for other UN bodies is also included in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (Public Law 87-195, as amended).

<sup>2</sup> The UN system consists of the UN itself, specialized agencies, peacekeeping operations, UN funds and programs, and related entities. See Appendix C for additional details about the UN system.

In March 2025, he announced further reform efforts under the UN80 Initiative, focusing on enhancing operational efficiency and exploring structural reforms across the UN system.

As the largest contributor to the UN, the United States has a strong interest in promoting UN management reform initiatives. To advance UN management reform, Congress levied caps on payments of U.S. assessments<sup>3</sup> and withheld or placed conditions on funding for UN entities or activities.<sup>4</sup> Congress also enacted legislation requiring the Department to report on UN management reform, often on specific items such as whistleblower protections.<sup>5</sup> As detailed in this report, the United States advocates for reforms in UN management processes.

## **Mission and Organization**

In the Department, the IO Bureau leads in the development, coordination, and implementation of U.S. multilateral policy and implements U.S. policy toward international organizations with particular emphasis on UN system organizations, as stated in 1 Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) 331. The IO Bureau's two most recent bureau strategies both addressed UN management reform. The FY 2018-2021 bureau strategy included UN management reform as a standalone goal and incorporated objectives and subobjectives related to cost containment and budget discipline, transparency, accountability and governance norms, and advocacy for U.S. citizen employment in UN organizations. The FY 2022-2026 bureau strategy, updated in January 2025, linked these themes as subobjectives to other IO Bureau goals rather than as a specific goal.

During the period of this review, two offices within the IO Bureau were broadly responsible for UN management reform. The Office of Management Policy and Resources (MPR) monitored budgetary, financial, administrative, and management issues in the UN system and formulated and implemented U.S. policies on these matters. The Office of Multilateral Strategy and Personnel (MSP) implemented strategies for election and appointment of U.S. citizens to leadership roles in UN agencies and managed recruitment and advocacy to support U.S. citizen employment in international organizations.

MPR and MSP coordinated their activities with several other IO Bureau offices, the seven U.S. missions to the UN,<sup>6</sup> Department regional and functional bureaus, and a range of interested interagency partners. For example, MPR worked with the Management and Reform Section (MR) of the U.S. Mission to the UN in New York. MR formulates U.S. positions in the UN's Fifth

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<sup>3</sup> For example, in the early 1990s, the U.S. peacekeeping assessment was more than 30 percent. In 1994, Congress capped U.S. funding at 25 percent of the peacekeeping budget for all fiscal years after 1995 (Public Law 103-236, Section 404).

<sup>4</sup> Section 7048 of Division F in annual Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs appropriations bills generally includes provisions on U.S. withholdings and conditions for funding UN entities.

<sup>5</sup> Section 4(a) of the United Nations Participation Act of 1945 (Public Law 79-264) requires the Department to submit annual reports on U.S. participation in the UN, and Section 4(b) of the Act requires annual reporting on U.S. funding to international organizations.

<sup>6</sup> The seven U.S. missions to the UN are in Geneva, Switzerland; Montreal, Canada; Nairobi, Kenya; New York, United States; Paris, France; Rome, Italy; and Vienna, Austria.

Committee and oversees budgets and administrative frameworks of UN agencies.<sup>7,8</sup> The IO Bureau and MR staff told OIG that MR, which is normally led by an ambassadorial-level appointee, enjoys wide latitude to establish and act on UN management reform priorities.

The UN's consensus-based decision-making model means the United States relies on negotiation and coalition-building to advance its positions on UN management reform in an environment where each of the UN's 192 other members have their own interests. Many UN organizations have unique structures, rules, and procedures, which further complicate progress on management reform. Additionally, IO Bureau staff told OIG that UN management reform efforts were constantly evolving, due to emerging information related to specific reform issues. For example, UN oversight agencies regularly report findings on management issues within UN agencies, such as whistleblower protections. These findings may require an agency to adjust its reform efforts and change the IO Bureau's approach on that reform area.

During this review, the IO Bureau's operating environment was impacted by:

- Executive Order 14155, issued January 20, 2025, which withdrew the United States from the World Health Organization.<sup>9</sup>
- Executive Order 14169, issued January 20, 2025, which paused U.S. foreign development assistance and required a review of foreign assistance programs, including those implemented through international organizations.<sup>10</sup>
- Executive Order 14199, issued February 4, 2025, which initiated a review of U.S. membership in all international organizations and treaties, ended U.S. participation in the UN Human Rights Council, and mandated a review of U.S. membership in the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).<sup>11,12</sup>
- The Department's announcement of a department-wide reorganization and notification that it intended to reduce domestic staff by 15 percent, issued April 22, 2025.<sup>13</sup>
- The Department's Congressional Notification, issued May 29, 2025, which contained additional details regarding the reorganization. IO Bureau leadership told OIG that, effective August 4, 2025, MPR's finance unit would transition to the newly established Office of Finance, Planning and Oversight. Additionally, half of MPR's management

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<sup>7</sup> The UN's Fifth Committee is also known as the Administrative and Budgetary Committee.

<sup>8</sup> See OIG, *Inspection of the U.S. Mission to the United Nations, New York* (ISP-I-25-06, February 2025) for more information on MR and its activities.

<sup>9</sup> Executive Order 14155, *Withdrawing the United States From the World Health Organization*, January 20, 2025.

<sup>10</sup> Executive Order 14169, *Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid*, January 20, 2025.

<sup>11</sup> Executive Order 14199, *Withdrawing the United States From and Ending Funding to Certain United Nations Organizations and Reviewing United States Support to All International Organizations*, February 4, 2025. As a result, of the review, the United States determined it would withdraw from 34 non-UN organizations and 31 UN organizations. See Presidential Memorandum, *Withdrawing the United States from International Organizations, Conventions, and Treaties that Are Contrary to the Interests of the United States*, January 7, 2026.

<sup>12</sup> On July 22, 2025, the United States announced its withdrawal from UNESCO, effective December 31, 2026.

<sup>13</sup> The Department initiated a reduction in force of domestic Civil Service and Foreign Service staff on July 11, 2025, and began to implement a reorganization plan on July 14, 2025.

reform staff would join the Office of Scientific and Technical Agencies, while the rest would join the newly established Office of Economic and Civil Affairs.

## FINDINGS

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### **Bureau of International Organization Affairs Did Not Consistently Monitor and Evaluate United Nations Management Reform Efforts Related to Governance, Transparency, and Accountability**

Although the IO Bureau defined goals and objectives related to UN good governance, transparency, and accountability, as required by 18 FAM 301.2-4(A), and successfully advocated for UN reform measures, OIG found the IO Bureau lacked a process to monitor and evaluate its efforts related to UN good governance, transparency, and accountability consistently. These standards are defined in 18 FAM 301.4-3 and 18 FAM 301.4-4.<sup>14</sup> The IO Bureau instead relied on the institutional knowledge of individual employees who monitored the status of reform efforts within their portfolios.

OIG determined the IO Bureau took steps to address this issue but struggled to identify practical performance indicators to help guide its work or to establish standard operating procedures to guide the work of employees engaged in UN management reform. In March 2025, the IO Bureau completed case studies on reform efforts at two UN organizations, with hopes to use these studies as references for future reform engagements. Additionally, in 2024, to better meet Federal Assistance Directive requirements to conduct risk assessments on organizations receiving U.S. funding, the IO Bureau began work on a risk assessment template for the UN and other international entities it oversaw. The draft template included assessing risks related to management reform.<sup>15</sup> According to bureau staff, the template would help IO Bureau staff consistently address, monitor, and evaluate specific reform areas and better identify risk by organization and across the UN system.

Although the IO Bureau took steps to bring its overall strategic planning processes in compliance with 18 FAM 300,<sup>16</sup> it will be important for the bureau to develop a systematic and consistent approach to monitor and evaluate its UN management reform program, especially

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<sup>14</sup> OIG found the IO Bureau generally met 18 FAM 300 requirements for strategic direction and management of its efforts to limit growth in UN budgets and advance U.S. citizen representation in UN organizations.

<sup>15</sup> The Department's Federal Assistance Directive establishes internal guidance, policies, and procedures for all domestic and overseas grant-making bureaus, offices, and posts within the Department administering federal financial assistance. The Federal Assistance Directive, Chapter 2, Section K requires Department entities to conduct a risk assessment that addresses organizational, programmatic, and country/region specific risks. The risk assessment must include a prescribed worksheet. IO Bureau staff told OIG this worksheet was not well suited for international organizations. As a result, the bureau decided to perform initial risk assessments using the worksheet and to develop a template that would assist it to assess risk holistically for the organizations it oversaw. At the time of this review, the bureau submitted a draft template to the Bureau of Administration for approval.

<sup>16</sup> These steps included designating a bureau evaluation coordinator in 2022, beginning annual progress reviews of its strategic goals and objectives in 2024, and identifying its major programs in 2024.

regarding governance, transparency, and accountability. Such actions will help the IO Bureau make informed decisions, develop innovative ways to address budget constraints, prioritize resources, and ensure alignment with the administration's policies.

**Recommendation 1:** The Bureau of International Organization Affairs should implement a consistent process to monitor and evaluate its efforts to advance United Nations management reforms related to governance, transparency, and accountability, in accordance with Department standards. (Action: IO Bureau)

## **Bureau of International Organization Affairs Advanced Management Reforms To Address Governance, Accountability, and Transparency in the United Nations System**

The IO Bureau oversaw administrative and management policy issues for 56 international organizations that received U.S. funds and advocated for management reforms in those organizations, including the UN system. Reforms to improve governance, transparency, and accountability included improving investigative capacity to internally identify and act on waste, fraud, and abuse; promoting policies to protect staff from sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA); strengthening internal audit functions and whistleblower protections; and building risk assessment capacity. The IO Bureau provided technical and policy expertise and guidance on UN management reform and, in this effort, coordinated closely with U.S. missions to the UN and other U.S. government entities. OIG's review of IO Bureau-provided documentation and staff interviews indicated coordination included preparing formal policy papers, providing informal guidance and advice, and engaging with UN governing bodies and UN member states, usually through one of the U.S. missions to the UN.

IO Bureau staff told OIG they typically identified opportunities to advocate for UN management reform through reviews of:

- Reports from internal and external UN oversight bodies that identified potential problems and recommended mitigation strategies.<sup>17</sup>
- Information from the U.S. missions to the UN that flagged management reform opportunities identified through engagement with UN organizations.
- Agendas prepared for meetings of UN organization governing bodies.
- High visibility public incidents that required immediate attention and action.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Such oversight entities included the Joint Inspection Unit, an independent UN external oversight body that conducts evaluations, inspections, and investigations; the Office of Internal Oversight Services, an internal body that assists the UN Secretary-General to fulfill oversight responsibilities; and the Multilateral Performance Network, a network of 21 donor countries which carries out assessments of multilateral organizations to improve performance and accountability. Additionally, UN system agencies and organizations generally have offices or units that conduct oversight.

<sup>18</sup> For example, in 2022, internal UN oversight work identified financial misconduct by a senior official at the UN Office for Project Services, which led to significant media reporting on the misconduct. As a result, the IO Bureau helped lead reforms requiring fiscal responsibility and transparency from the agency and aided in the recovery of \$123 million in lost funds to member states, including \$7 million to the United States.

OIG found that the IO Bureau, working with the U.S. missions to the UN, promoted UN management reforms that improved transparency, accountability, governance, and management across the UN and within individual UN organizations, as described below.

***United Nations Procurement Reform Improved Processes and Benefited U.S. Interests***

OIG observed that reforms to strengthen UN procurement practices occurred over a period of years and addressed evidence the procurement practices were not fair, competitive, or transparent. In 2007, a UN task force found 10 different schemes to defraud the UN of more than \$600 million in contracts and misappropriation of more than \$25 million.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, a Government Accountability Office review in 2006 found the UN's procurement system lacked an effective organizational structure, a professional workforce, and ethics guidance for staff.<sup>20</sup> As a result of these two reports, UN procurement reform became a focus for the IO Bureau and MR staff.

The IO Bureau and MR staff, working with other entities from 2008 to 2020, advocated successfully for a long-term effort to improve UN procurement oversight, governance, and business processes. The resulting reforms included strengthening the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services' capacity to investigate procurement mismanagement and fraud; establishing an independent bid protest system; awarding procurement contracts awards based on price, supplier experience, and technical capacity; establishing procurement principles to strengthen controls;<sup>21</sup> and codifying the procurement management process in the UN Procurement Manual. Although the measures discussed above took place before the timeframe of this review, they represent examples where reforms led to results that continued to benefit U.S. interests over time.

The IO Bureau, MR, and Department of Commerce staff told OIG these cumulative reforms to UN procurement processes generally resulted in a more open, transparent, and competitive process. The Department of Commerce, which offers seminars to inform U.S. companies about the UN procurement system, told OIG the revised UN procurement systems to register and bid for procurement contracts were more user-friendly and easier to navigate. The Department of Commerce also said the number of U.S. companies registering to bid in the UN's online system increased from 7,550 suppliers in 2014 to 23,806 suppliers in 2023, which staff considered as indicating confidence that UN procurement opportunities were fair and competitive. As a result, U.S. companies' total sale of procurement goods and services to the UN increased from \$1.5 billion in 2014 to \$2.2 billion in 2023, as shown in Figure 1.

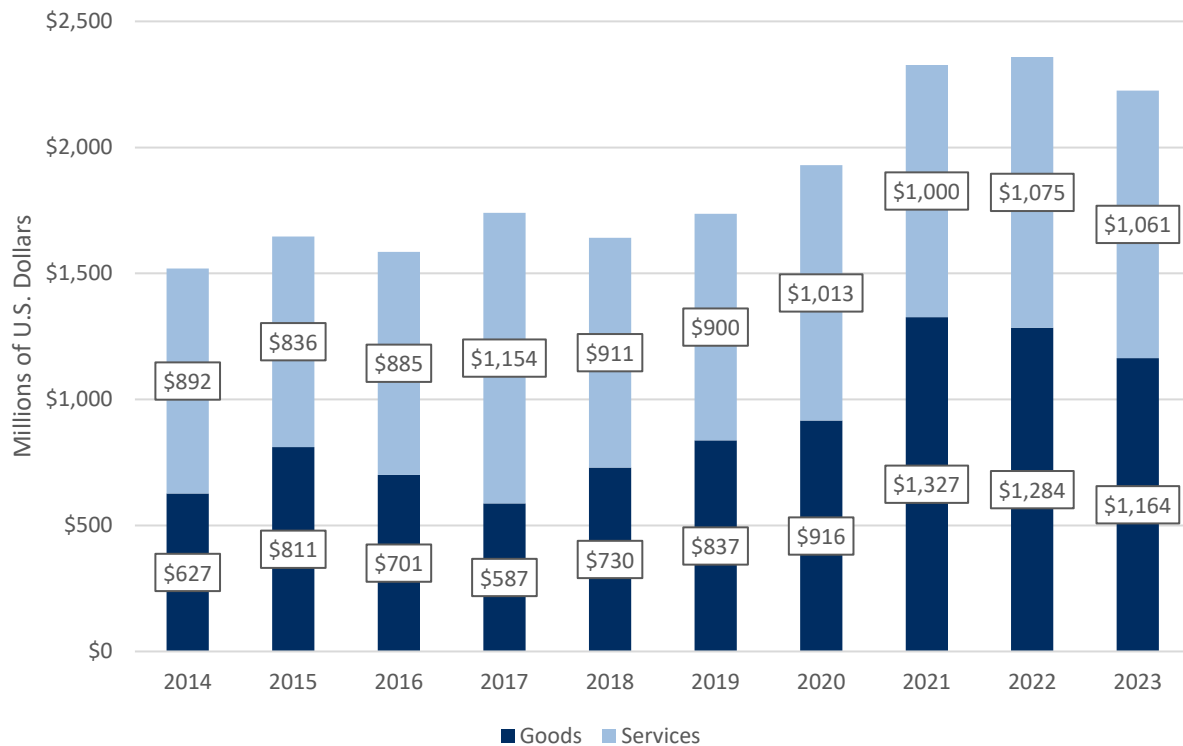
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<sup>19</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Service on the activities of the Procurement Task Force for the 18-month period ended 30 June 2007*, A/62/272, October 5, 2007.

<sup>20</sup> Government Accountability Office, *United Nations Procurement Internal Controls Are Weak* (GAO-06-577, April 2006).

<sup>21</sup> The four procurement principles included best value for money; fairness, integrity and transparency; effective international competition; and the interest of the UN.

**Figure 1: Total United Nations Procurement of Goods and Services from the United States, From 2014 to 2023 (in Millions of U.S. Dollars)<sup>a</sup>**



<sup>a</sup> The years refer to the calendar years the UN procured the goods and services.

**Source:** OIG generated based on data from the 2023 Annual Statistical Report on United Nations Procurement.

In 2023, U.S. companies were the UN's largest supplier of goods and services, with 8.9 percent of the UN's total procurement volume of \$24.9 billion. With the positive results from process improvements, IO Bureau staff told OIG procurement management reform was no longer a focus for the bureau.

### ***Bureau Promoted Efforts To Combat Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in United Nations Organizations***

The UN had a written policy of zero-tolerance for SEA in peacekeeping operations and UN agencies. However, despite longstanding efforts by the UN to address it, SEA remained a problem. From 2017 to 2025, there were 3,711 allegations of SEA, implicating 4,384 UN personnel. Understanding the critical need to combat SEA, the IO Bureau and the U.S. missions to the UN promoted efforts in the UN to address SEA by:

- Advocating for the passage of UN Security Resolution 2436 in 2018, which established a set of performance and accountability requirements for peacekeeping operations, including requirements for improved background vetting and training of UN staff to conduct investigations.
- Coordinating with the UN Special Coordinator for SEA to work across the UN system to strengthen the UN response to SEA. The Office of the Special Coordinator on Improving

the UN Response to SEA was the key driver for the UN's Clear Check system, instituted in 2018, to avoid hiring or re-hiring individuals who committed SEA or sexual harassment in the UN system.

- Promoting administrative measures to support efforts in addressing SEA in UN peacekeeping operations, such as the 2023 suspension and detainment of peacekeepers accused of SEA in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
- Supporting the development of a UN public portal in 2024 for SEA paternity claims against peacekeepers.
- Advocating for policies to prevent SEA in UN agencies. In 2024, the IO Bureau supported the adoption of protocols, such as a code of conduct for delegates and participants attending meetings at the International Maritime Organization, following allegations of sexual misconduct perpetrated by conference attendees.

### ***Bureau Advanced Management Reform Initiatives in United Nations Agencies***

OIG determined the IO Bureau also collaborated with the U.S. missions to the UN and other UN agencies to advance management reforms within individual agencies. For example:

- In 2017, the IO Bureau helped drive a reform process in the UN Human Settlements Programme, following donor funding cuts. These efforts included electing a reform-minded Director General and adopting tighter finance and accountability controls.<sup>22</sup>
- In 2022, after the election of a new Secretary-General for the International Telecommunication Union, the IO Bureau supported reforms to address longstanding oversight concerns.<sup>23</sup> The IO Bureau successfully advocated for the creation of an internal oversight unit to provide independent audit, investigative, and evaluation services.
- In 2022, the IO Bureau advocated for the International Labour Organization's implementation of reform measures, including adding a full-time ethics officer and creating a public website to report disciplinary measures for substantiated cases of fraud and misconduct.
- In 2023, the IO Bureau helped the World Meteorological Organization address a longstanding internal oversight recommendation from the Joint Inspection Unit to develop an investigation mechanism for addressing allegations of senior leader misconduct.
- Following the 2023 large-scale diversion of food assistance to Ethiopia, the World Food Programme undertook its Global Assurance Project, with recommendations from the IO Bureau to enhance internal controls for delivery of assistance, prioritizing operations in high-risk countries and operating environments.

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<sup>22</sup> IO Bureau staff told OIG that, in September 2024, the UN Human Settlements Programme's Executive Board determined that 85 percent of Joint Inspection Unit recommendations had been closed.

<sup>23</sup> Examples of reform efforts include updating outdated human resource policies, increasing budget transparency, and improving a management accountability framework.

- In 2024, the IO Bureau supported the UN International Children's Emergency Fund's adoption of a new risk management framework that included adding a chief risk officer to address weaknesses in enterprise risk management.

## **Bureau of International Organization Affairs Advocated for United Nations Budget Discipline**

The United States funds the UN system through both assessed and voluntary contributions.<sup>24</sup> Assessed contributions are mandatory dues set by each UN organization's governing body and based on an agreed assessment scale. Assessed contributions fund core functions and regular budgets of the UN, as well as specialized UN agencies—such as the International Civil Aviation Organization and the Universal Postal Union—and peacekeeping operations. Voluntary contributions are discretionary financial assistance that directly advance U.S. strategic objectives. Voluntary contributions mainly support UN funds and programs such as the World Food Programme and the UN International Children's Emergency Fund. From FY 2017 through FY 2024, the IO Bureau directly managed \$24.3 billion in U.S. assessed and voluntary contributions to the UN system.

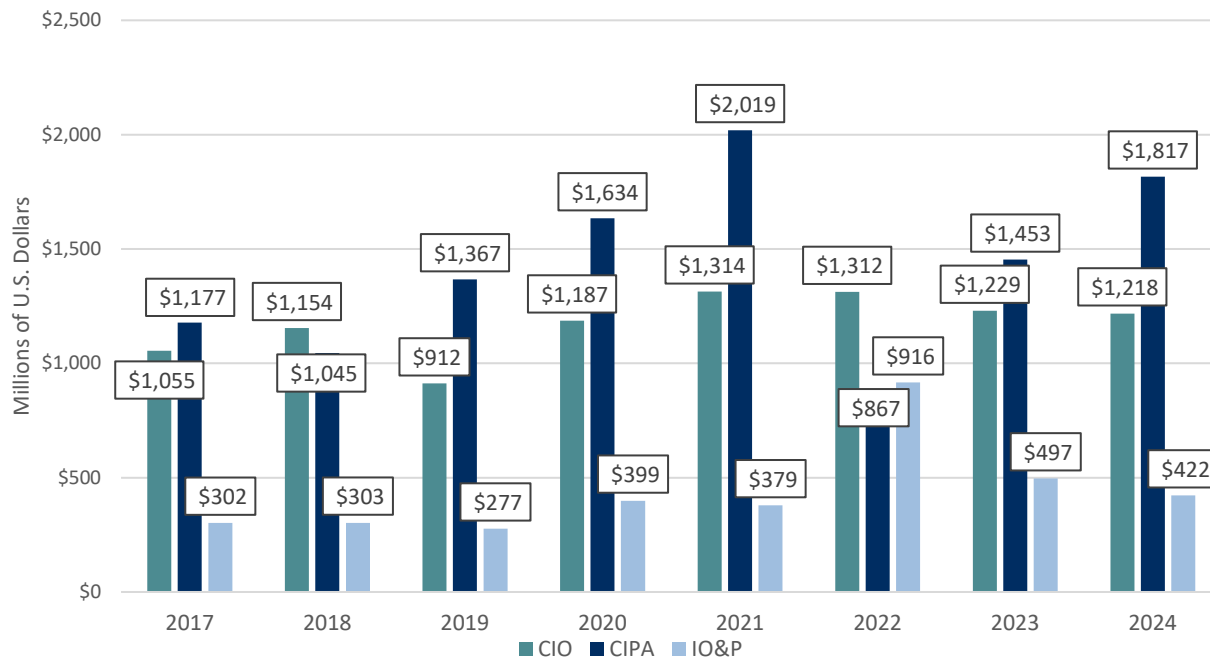
In accordance with 1 FAM 333.2b(1), the IO Bureau managed annual funding for both assessed and voluntary contributions in three accounts: the Contributions to International Organizations (CIO) account, for assessed contributions to general budgets; the Contributions for International Peacekeeping Activities (CIPA) account, for assessed contributions to peacekeeping operations; and the International Organizations and Programs (IO&P) account, for voluntary contributions. The IO Bureau developed a software application, known as IO Finance, to track organizations' budgets, invoices, and disbursements internally.<sup>25</sup> Figure 2 presents the IO bureau-managed funds provided to the UN system by type of account from 2017 to 2024.

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<sup>24</sup> For more information, see OIG, *Evaluation of the Department's Efforts To Improve Oversight of its Funding to International Organizations*, (ISP-I-26-02).

<sup>25</sup> The Department produces an annual *Report to Congress on U.S. Contributions to International Organizations* that includes all contributions from the U.S. government.

**Figure 2: IO Bureau-Managed Funds Provided to the United Nations System, From 2017 to 2024 (in Millions of U.S. Dollars)<sup>a</sup>**



<sup>a</sup> The years refer to the calendar years the IO Bureau provided the funds.

Source: OIG generated based on financial data provided by the IO Bureau.

### ***Bureau Advocated for Budget Discipline and Cost Containment***

It is Department policy to ensure U.S. assessment rates do not exceed the congressional caps of 22 percent of the general budgets of UN organizations or 25 percent of the budgets for peacekeeping operations.<sup>26</sup> OIG found the IO Bureau's strategy to limit costs in UN organization budgets was based on a policy of zero nominal growth, which allowed for no growth, including adjustments for inflation.

The IO Bureau reviewed proposed budgets and worked with the U.S. missions to the UN to secure support for zero nominal growth from other member states. The IO Bureau also worked to reduce costs throughout the UN system through diplomatic engagement. Specifically, the IO Bureau's management and financial experts supported the U.S. co-chair of the Geneva Group<sup>27</sup> to improve governance, management, and budget discipline across the UN system.

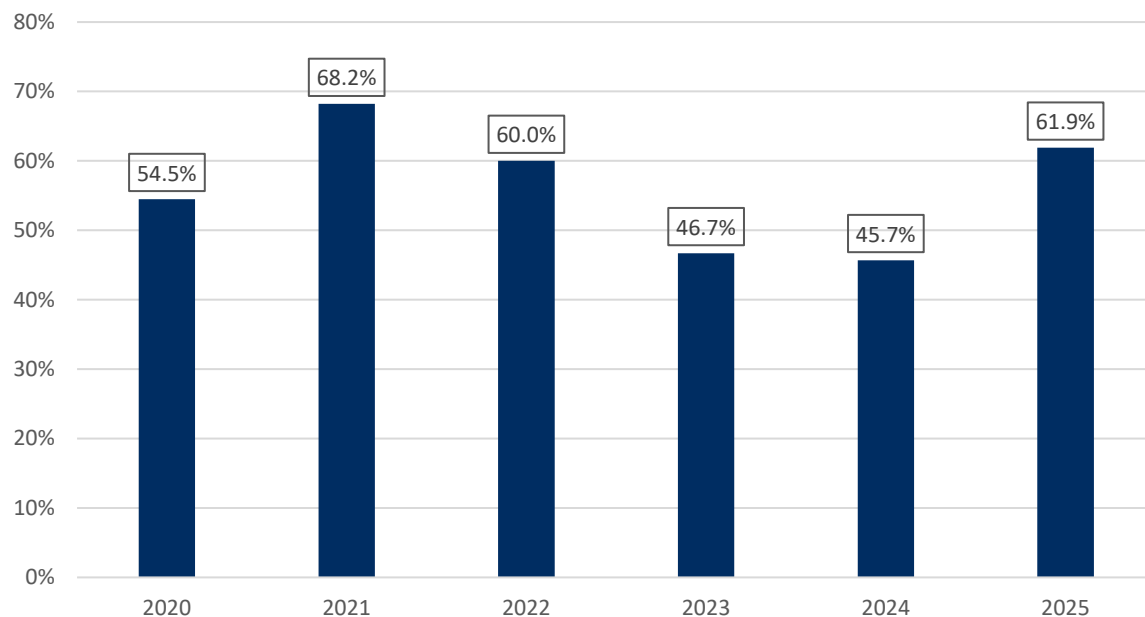
OIG determined the IO Bureau and the U.S. missions to the UN advocated consistently for zero nominal growth. However, as noted previously, decisions in the UN system are largely made by consensus. In instances where no consensus for zero nominal growth can be reached, the U.S. representative at budget negotiations has three options: decide not to join a consensus vote on

<sup>26</sup> The United States contributes 22 percent of the UN's regular budget annually, the largest of any UN member state. The UN General Assembly negotiates the scale of assessments every 3 years based on a country's capacity to pay.

<sup>27</sup> The Geneva Group is an informal consultative grouping of 17 UN member states that collectively contribute approximately 61 percent of UN organizations' assessed budgets.

anything other than a zero nominal growth budget, force a vote (and risk a loss), or support a more limited budget increase that could gain consensus among UN member states. In the latter case, the IO Bureau has applied criteria to contain budget growth and has sought approval from bureau or Department leadership to join consensus on a negotiated, limited increase.<sup>28</sup> For example, in 2023, the IO Bureau and the U.S. Mission to the UN in Geneva successfully negotiated reductions in proposed budget levels at the Universal Postal Union (a proposed 5 percent increase reduced to 1.7 percent) and at the World Meteorological Organization (a proposed 6.9 percent increase reduced to 2.4 percent). Figure 3 presents the portion of all UN organizations funded through the Department’s CIO account that had no budget increase from 2020 to 2025.

**Figure 3: Percentage of United Nation Organizations With No Budget Increase, From 2020 to 2025<sup>a</sup>**



<sup>a</sup> Percentages include all organizations funded through the Department’s CIO account. The years refer to the calendar years the assessments took effect.

**Source:** OIG analysis of data provided by the IO Bureau.

### ***Bureau Monitored Budgets and Financial Management Practices for Voluntary Contributions***

OIG found the IO Bureau exercised financial oversight of both voluntary contributions and assessed budgets and financial management in the UN system in accordance with 1 FAM 333.2b(2). The bureau’s financial analysts reviewed organizations’ financial statements and audit reports and monitored recommendations made by internal and external auditors to

<sup>28</sup> The IO Bureau developed three criteria for determining whether to support a proposed budget increase: (1) whether the proposed work program and budget transparently showed how resources link to expected accomplishments; (2) whether the proposed work plan and budget reflected cost savings through efficiencies, streamlining of business processes, and reallocation of resources from low-priority activities; and (3) whether not agreeing to the proposed increase would result in the organization not being able to deliver parts of its mandate that supported vital U.S. foreign policy objectives.

ensure that unresolved budget recommendations were discussed in relevant organizations' committees. The IO Bureau also offered recommendations to address deficiencies identified in audit reports and supported U.S. missions to the UN in their budget negotiations. The IO Bureau's financial management staff told OIG that the program offices responsible for individual UN organizations, both in the IO Bureau and in other parts of the Department, were primarily responsible for setting the voluntary contribution amounts to achieve U.S. policy objectives.<sup>29</sup>

### **Bureau of International Organization Affairs Advocated for Elections of U.S. Citizens to Leadership Positions in the United Nations and Supported Employment of U.S. Citizens in United Nations Organizations**

The IO Bureau pursued opportunities for U.S. citizen employment in the UN system to advance U.S. policy priorities, including UN management reform. Increased U.S. citizen representation in the UN and other international organizations is also considered a means to instill U.S. values in UN organizations, compete with strategic competitors, and ensure long-term impact in the multilateral system.

Based on UN formulas for target staffing levels, the United States was underrepresented across the range of UN organizations.<sup>30</sup> For example, in 2022, the UN Secretariat's target for U.S. representation ranged from 394 to 533 professional positions, yet U.S. citizens filled only 374 of those positions. In 2021, responding to concerns from the White House and Congress, the Department created MSP to expand efforts to increase the number of U.S. citizens working in the UN and other international organizations and to support U.S. candidates in UN elections. In 2022, the IO Bureau established a data center to track a variety of data, including UN system employment statistics, U.S. citizen employment, and comparison data for U.S. and strategic competitors.<sup>31</sup> The IO Bureau met 18 FAM 300 requirements for strategic direction by creating a strategy and establishing objectives and metrics for the office to expand opportunities for U.S. citizens, reporting to Congress each year.<sup>32</sup>

The IO Bureau and UN mission staff told OIG that advocating for U.S. citizens across a variety of multilateral organizations required personal, hands-on engagement for unique positions, individual counseling, multilateral negotiations, training, follow-up mentoring, as well as close communication with U.S. government entities. IO Bureau staff told OIG that a lack of transparent personnel data in UN organizations challenged the bureau's efforts. However, in

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<sup>29</sup> Additionally, voluntary contributions may be specified by organization in the President's budget request, and in most years, Congress further directs allocations through the appropriations process.

<sup>30</sup> The UN Secretariat and some other UN-affiliated agencies have established formal procedures to determine member states' target range for equitable representation among geographic positions based on membership status, population size, and assessed financial contributions.

<sup>31</sup> The IO Bureau Data Center evolved from the Department's Center for Analytics. It has focused on obtaining UN data directly, creating platforms for collaboration, using automation and artificial intelligence, and building analytic dashboards.

<sup>32</sup> See Report to Congress on Expanding Opportunities at the UN for U.S. Citizens, Section 7019(e) of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2024 (Div. F, P.L. 118-47) and Senate Report 118-71 and the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025 (P.L. 119-4).

2024, the U.S. Mission to UNESCO, with bureau support, successfully advocated for UNESCO to include data on all UN member state employees, not just those elected or appointed, in its human resources reports. This change in reporting improved transparency and demonstrated the need to hire more U.S. citizens. As described in more detail below, OIG determined the IO Bureau's strategy and tools promoted the election of well-qualified candidates to leadership positions in the UN system, increased opportunities for U.S. citizens in mid-level positions in UN organizations and expanded the pipeline for U.S. citizens entering the UN system through the junior professional officer program.

### ***Bureau Advocated for U.S. Citizen Candidates for Elections to Leadership Positions***

OIG found that, since 2021, the IO Bureau expanded its advocacy database, streamlined processes, and strengthened collaboration with UN missions to support U.S. citizen candidates for leadership positions in UN agencies. Elections to high-level leadership positions are decided by UN agency membership votes. The IO Bureau coordinates with U.S. missions to the UN and interagency partners to identify positions, vet and prioritize possible nominees, and campaign for candidates. The IO Bureau's 24-month elections preview and monthly meetings with regional bureaus alert the Department and U.S. government agencies of positions for which they might propose candidates. IO Bureau's multilateral election tracker records projected vote counts for U.S. candidates across international organizations to prioritize efforts to promote U.S. candidates. From 2021 to 2024, the IO Bureau supported 26 U.S. citizens in elections for positions in multilateral entities, 23 of whom were elected. For example, a U.S. citizen was elected as Secretary-General of the International Telecommunications Union in 2022, and another was elected as Director General of the International Organization for Migration in 2023.

### ***Bureau Supported U.S. Citizen Employment in Mid-level Positions***

OIG found the IO Bureau supported U.S. citizen job seekers for a wide range of mid-level appointments using the bureau's public website,<sup>33</sup> providing a responsive and transparent process that included counseling and coaching. In February 2024, the IO Bureau redesigned its website to improve readability and functionality. From the February 2024 website relaunch through May 2025, the IO Bureau recorded 31,563 website views and over 1,500 requests for advocacy. In comparison, from May 2023 until the February 2024 relaunch, the IO Bureau recorded only 7,715 website views and 234 requests. The IO Bureau's Advocacy+ database application, developed in 2022, enabled the IO Bureau and the U.S. missions to the UN to share real-time information on candidates and opportunities.<sup>34</sup> By 2023, the IO Bureau and U.S. missions to the UN had actively supported 70 requests from U.S. citizens competing for specific positions and noted successful appointments to the International Atomic Energy Agency, the International Labour Organization, the UN International Children's Emergency Fund, the World Meteorological Organization, and others. For example, when the United States rejoined

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<sup>33</sup> The IO Bureau's public information on international organization careers can be found at [iocareers.state.gov](https://iocareers.state.gov).

<sup>34</sup> The Advocacy+ database system streamlines intake, vetting, and approval of applicants who seek employment in UN organizations through a contact platform, the Talent Network. Supplied with contacts from the Talent Network, Advocacy+ connects international organizations, other Department partners, and U.S. missions to the UN in real time to proactively search for well-qualified candidates.

UNESCO in 2023,<sup>35</sup> 26 U.S. citizens worked there; as of February 2025, that number had increased to 48.

***Bureau Increased Support for the Junior Professional Officer Program***

To expand the pipeline for U.S. citizens entering the UN system through the junior ranks, in 2022 the IO Bureau obtained funding to support up to four junior professional officers, adding to those funded by other Department bureaus and U.S. government agencies.<sup>36</sup> With congressional support, the total number of junior professional officers funded by the U.S. government grew to 126 working in 19 UN organizations by June 2024.<sup>37</sup> The IO Bureau offered orientation, training, and networking opportunities for its junior professional officers and remained in contact with them should they need assistance. According to the IO Bureau, this program successfully launched careers in the UN system and improved the U.S. competitive position.

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<sup>35</sup> The United States withdrew from UNESCO in 2018 and rejoined it in 2023.

<sup>36</sup> Junior professional officers are young professionals financed or sponsored by their member country governments for 2 or 3 years and supervised by UN staff. Although the UN Secretariat publishes the number of junior professional officers funded by each country, the same does not hold true for other UN organizations, including the technical and specialized agencies.

<sup>37</sup> At the time of this review, the IO Bureau had 12 junior professional officers.

## RECOMMENDATION

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OIG provided a draft of this report to the Department for its review and comment on the findings and recommendation. OIG issued the following recommendation to the Bureau of International Organization Affairs. The bureau's complete response can be found in Appendix B.

**Recommendation 1:** The Bureau of International Organization Affairs should implement a consistent process to monitor and evaluate its efforts to advance United Nations management reforms related to governance, transparency, and accountability, in accordance with Department standards. (Action: IO Bureau)

**Management Response:** In its December 9, 2025, response, the Bureau of International Organization Affairs concurred with this recommendation.

**OIG Reply:** OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation that the Bureau of International Organization Affairs implemented a consistent process to monitor and evaluate its efforts to advance United Nations management reforms related to governance, transparency, and accountability, in accordance with Department standards.

## APPENDIX A: OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

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This review was conducted from March 17 to July 29, 2025,<sup>1</sup> in accordance with the Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation, as issued in 2020 by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, and the Inspections Handbook, as issued by the Office of Inspector General (OIG) for the Department of State (Department) and the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM).

The Office of Inspections provides the Secretary of State, the Chief Executive Officer of USAGM, and Congress with systematic and independent evaluations of the operations of the Department and USAGM. Consistent with Section 209 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980, OIG's objectives for this review were to:

- Determine the Bureau of International Organization Affairs' (IO Bureau) processes for establishing goals and objectives for UN management reform and for identifying risks to goals and objectives.
- Assess the IO Bureau's progress in achieving reform goals and objectives.

OIG reviewed the IO Bureau's efforts to advance United Nations (UN) management reform from January 2017 through January 2025 in the areas of governance, transparency, and accountability; cost containment; and advocacy for U.S. citizen representation in UN agencies.

OIG used a risk-based approach to prepare for this review. OIG conducted portions of the review remotely and relied on audio- and video-conferencing tools in addition to in-person interviews with Department and other personnel. OIG also reviewed pertinent records; conducted research; and discussed the substance of this report and its findings and recommendations with offices, individuals, and organizations affected by the review. OIG used professional judgment and analyzed documentary and testimonial evidence to develop its findings and conclusions.

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<sup>1</sup> The issuance of this report was delayed due to the lapse in appropriations, which began October 1, 2025, and ended November 12, 2025.

## APPENDIX B: MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

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United States Department of State

Washington, DC 20520

UNCLASSIFIED

December 9, 2025

TO: OIG – Lisa Rodely, Acting Assistant Inspector General for Inspections

FROM: IO – McCoy Pitt, Senior Bureau Official

SUBJECT: Response to Draft OIG Review of the Bureau of International Organization Affairs' Efforts to Advance United Nations Management Reform

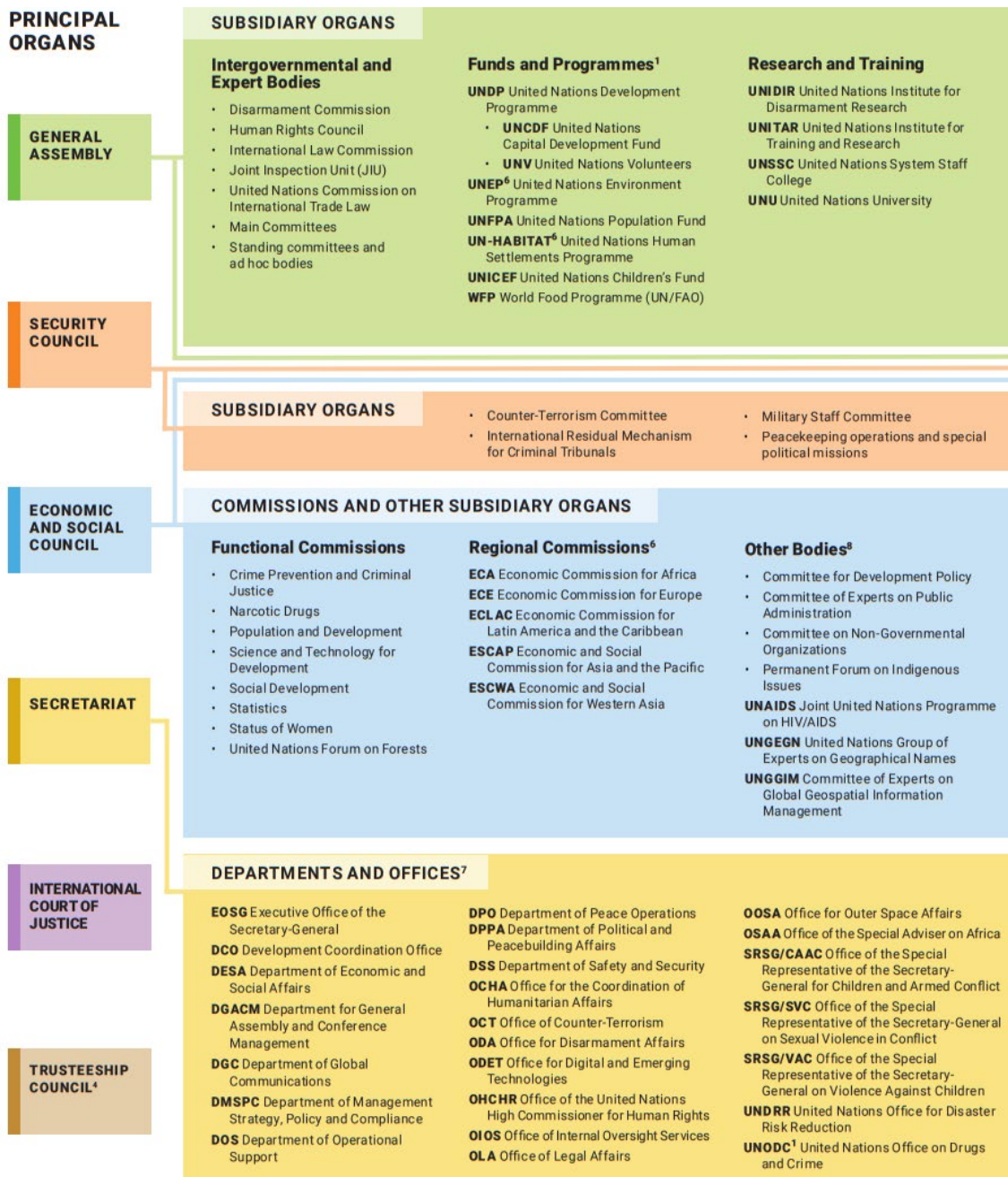
The Bureau of International Organization Affairs (IO) has reviewed the draft OIG report. We provide the following comments in response to the recommendations provided by OIG:

**OIG Recommendation 1:** The Bureau of International Organization Affairs should implement a consistent process to monitor and evaluate its efforts to advance United Nations management reforms related to governance, transparency, and accountability, in accordance with Department standards. (Action: IO Bureau)

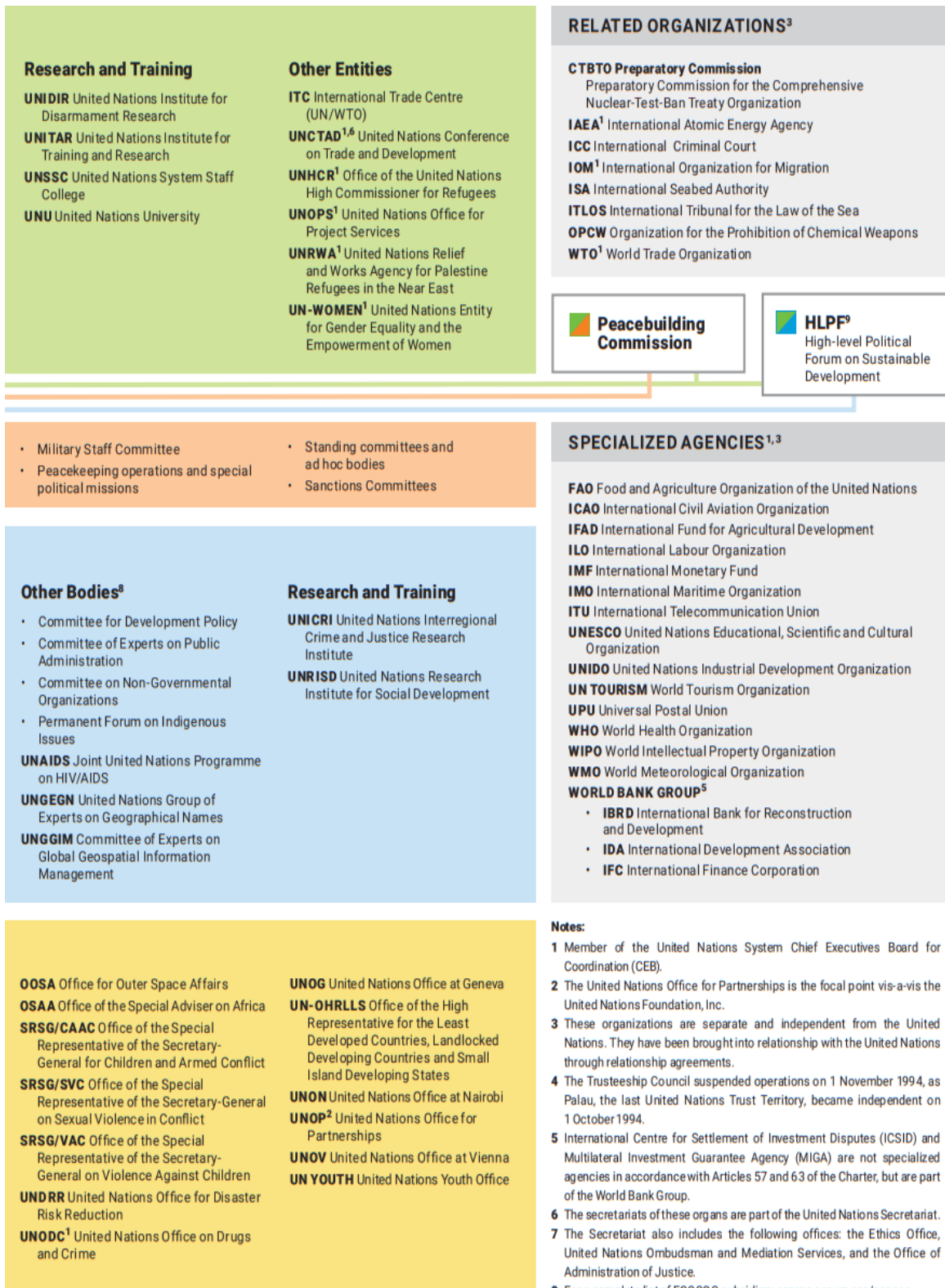
**Management Response:** IO concurs with the recommendation. In 2025, the Bureau initiated voluntary changes to its organizational structure to institutionalize focus on oversight of United Nations and other multilateral organizations, including to improve the bureau's capacity to devise and implement management reforms and measure, monitor, and evaluate the efficacy of those reforms in accordance with Department standards. At the time of this report, a hiring freeze has prevented the final staffing of personnel for this function, but the bureau is poised to fully staff the new IO Office of Policy, Finance, and Oversight (IO/PFO) when permitted. The Bureau also awaits the results of the E.O. 14199 review, *Withdrawing the United States From and Ending Funding to Certain United Nations Organizations and Reviewing United States Support to All International Organizations*, which will help guide the bureau's efforts for the highest priority reform targets. IO/PFO is already finalizing preparations to launch a process with IO's new Office of Economic and Civil Affairs (IO/ECA) and the Office of Specialized and Technical Affairs (IO/STA), as well as other key offices in the

bureau, to set new management reform priorities, goals, objectives, and metrics that align with the Trump Administration's policy priorities. This effort will also allow IO to clearly outline our approach to management reform in our new regional bureau strategy and each IO Mission's integrated mission strategy, when those strategies are tasked by the Bureau of Budget and Planning.

# APPENDIX C: UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM



Right section next page



Source: United Nations website.



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