

Reports of the Joint Inspection Unit

Report by the Director-General

1. This report presents recommendations of reports of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) of the United Nations system issued since the Secretariat's last report to the Committee.¹ The latest annual review cycle covers the period January 2024 to December 2024.² In 2024, the JIU issued six reports,³ two of which were not relevant to WHO.⁴
2. The relevant reports for the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee's consideration cover: Flexible working arrangements in United Nations systems (document JIU/REP/2023/6); Review of the use of non-staff personnel and related contractual modalities in the United Nations system organizations (document JIU/REP/2023/8); Review of the quality, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of health insurance schemes in the United Nations system organizations (document JIU/REP/2023/9); and Review of consideration of and action taken on the reports and recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit by United Nations systems organizations (document JIU/REP/2024/2).
3. Pursuant to past practice, as part of the overall process surrounding the JIU, the Secretariat provides its initial comments on recently published JIU reports as part of a United Nations system-wide questionnaire managed by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB). The CEB consolidates all United Nations organizations' comments in a document subsequently issued by the Secretary-General and available on the JIU website's reports page under "Comments" adjacent to each respective JIU report.⁵

¹ Document EBPBAC40/5.

² Although the period reflects 2024, the JIU's numbering includes 2023 as they cover those reports that were part of earlier JIU workplans but issued in 2024.

³ All JIU reports and notes are available at [JIU Reports and Notes](#) (accessed 31 March 2025).

⁴ Documents JIU/REP/2023/7 (Review of governance and oversight of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS/UNICEF and UN-Women) and JIU/REP/2024/1 (Review of management and administration in the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)).

⁵ See "CEB Comments" for individual JIU reports, available at [JIU Reports and Notes](#) (accessed 31 March 2025).

Implementation of recommendations directed to the Secretariat

4. Paragraphs 5–21 below summarize the Secretariat’s consideration of, and, where relevant, progress in implementing, JIU recommendations directly relevant to WHO that are directed to the Director-General (“executive heads of United Nations system organizations”) for reports issued during the period January 2024 to December 2024.

Flexible working arrangements in United Nations systems (document JIU/REP/2023/6)

5. *JIU recommendation 1: The executive heads of United Nations system organizations who have not yet done so should ensure, at the earliest opportunity or in the context of established internal policy review processes, that a generic definition of flexible working arrangements is included in their organization’s policy guidance, in order to clearly establish the scope of the policy and differentiate the arrangements from other forms of flexible work.* The Secretariat has already implemented this recommendation as it has a policy, existing since September 2022, that also includes a definition of flexible working arrangements.

6. *JIU recommendation 2: The executive heads of United Nations system organizations should develop, by the end of 2026, methods to measure the impact of the assumed benefits and the unintended consequences of flexible working arrangements, including the effects of prolonged teleworking modalities, to ensure that the arrangements in place are in the best interests of the personnel and the organization.* The Secretariat aims to monitor the impacts of the policy even though doing so remains challenging. A system-wide methodology to measure impact could be established in order to achieve comparable baseline data.

7. *JIU recommendation 3: The executive heads of United Nations system organizations should integrate flexible working arrangement considerations into the next iteration of their organization’s human resources management strategy, in order to ensure a strategic approach to flexible working arrangements.* The Secretariat will take consideration of flexible working arrangements forward into its next human resources management strategy.

8. *JIU recommendation 5: The executive heads of United Nations system organizations who have not yet done so should ensure, by 2025, that a quantifiable definition of “commuting distance” is included in their organization’s policy guidance on flexible working arrangements, for headquarters and field duty stations, in order to improve compliance with the exigencies of service provision. The executive heads should ensure that the commuting distance for field duty stations is established and reviewed, as appropriate, in close cooperation with all United Nations system entities physically present at the country level, under the auspices of the resident coordinators.* The Secretariat will continue to review appropriate commuting distances, noting that definitions and their application may well vary across United Nations organizations.

9. *JIU recommendation 6: The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations who have not yet done so should review, by 2025, the management systems and tools related to data collection and analysis of flexible working arrangements and ensure that they are upgraded as necessary and fit for purpose, in order to support data-driven and effective management of flexible working arrangements.* The Secretariat notes that its new Enterprise Resource Planning system is being progressively implemented between 2025 and 2026 and will include the elements of this recommendation.

Review of the use of non-staff personnel and related contractual modalities in the United Nations system organizations (document JIU/REP/2023/8)

10. *JIU recommendation 1: The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations who have not already done so should adopt, by the end of 2025, the term “affiliate personnel” as the common system-wide nomenclature for referring to all categories of contract holders who are not considered staff, and include the term in their relevant policy documents by the end of 2027.* The Secretariat notes that it implemented this recommendation at the beginning of 2024.

11. *JIU recommendation 2: The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should, by the end of 2025, adopt the following as a common system-wide definition of all categories of contract holders who are not considered staff: “Any individual engaged by a United Nations system organization to perform work or services for a limited period of time or for a period of time tied to a specific project, and whose contractual relationship is not governed by a letter of appointment subject to the staff regulations and rules of the respective organization.”* Within the framework of the review of contractual modalities, the Secretariat is examining potential adaptation to the proposed language with the aim of clearly preserving the distinction between staff and non-staff contracts.

12. *JIU recommendation 3: The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should conduct periodic reviews of their non-staff contractual modalities with a view to identifying critical positions of a continuous nature for the possible establishment of staff positions, funds permitting.* The Secretariat is already conducting such reviews as part of its normal operational and workforce planning cycle.

13. *JIU recommendation 4: Taking into consideration the employment relationship principle, the executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should, by the end of 2026, develop social benefit policies or schemes applicable to non-staff personnel performing functions of a continuous nature, with clear guidelines for their implementation.* Within the framework of the review of its contractual modalities, WHO is considering how to address this issue while preserving the distinction between staff and affiliate personnel contracts.

14. *JIU recommendation 6: The executive heads of the United Nations system organization who are not already doing so should include non-staff personnel in their regular workforce assessments so as to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of their policies and practices relating to the use of non-staff personnel.* The Director-General put in place a task force to review the contractual modalities across the Organization; it commenced its work at the end of 2020 and delivered its report and recommendations at the end of 2022. A global survey was issued as part of this Task Force and disseminated to the entire workforce.

15. *JIU recommendation 7: Taking into consideration the various organizational mandates and the diversity of non-staff contracts, as well as the diverse operational environments, the executive heads of the United Nations system organizations, in their capacity as members of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), should request the Human Resources Network of the High-level Committee on Management to review and set minimum standards and principles for non-staff contractual modalities commonly used by the United Nations system organizations, with a view to enhancing system-wide coherence and harmonization by the end of 2028.* The Secretariat notes that this recommendation is beyond its managerial control. Whereas WHO is willing to work with other United Nations organizations towards alignment in the context of the Human Resources Network, it should be noted that complete harmonization may not be feasible owing to differences across organizations in terms of mandates and operating models.

Review of the quality, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of health insurance schemes in the United Nations system organizations (document JIU/REP/2023/9)

16. *JIU recommendation 2: The executive heads of United Nations system organizations who have not yet done so should, by the end of 2026, explore discontinuing the practice of subsidizing premiums for secondary dependent family members, non-dependent family members and unrelated household members, and the practice of mutualizing their risks with those of primary members.* The Secretariat notes that this issue is currently under discussion with the WHO Staff Health Insurance programme's governing bodies, and will subsequently make recommendations to the Director-General for his decision.

17. *JIU recommendation 5: By the end of 2026, the executive heads of United Nations system organizations who have not yet done so should ensure that the highest level of protection is given to all beneficiaries' health insurance-related data, including medical reports, prescriptions, tests and reimbursed amounts, and that the disclosure, transmission, processing and storage of health insurance-related personal data be subject to the written consent of the person concerned and any possible exception be unequivocally spelled out in relevant policies.* The Secretariat is already compliant with this recommendation. The WHO Staff Health Insurance programme is developing new IT systems for its claims processing and data storage and will ensure that this new system is fully compliant.

18. *JIU recommendation 6: From 2026, the executive heads of United Nations system organizations who have not yet done so should ensure that voluntary contributions cover future after-service health insurance liabilities corresponding to staff working on programmes or projects funded from such contributions as they accrue.* The Secretariat has implemented this recommendation with an approved and operationalized plan to fully fund the after-service health insurance liability for all participants that has been in place since 2012.

Review of consideration of and action taken on the reports and recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit by United Nations systems organizations (document JIU/REP/2024/2)

19. *JIU recommendation 3: The executive heads of those United Nations system organizations should take individual or collective action, in consultation with the executive heads of other CEB member organizations, preferably within the framework of the CEB inter-agency coordination mechanisms, to revise the current CEB terminology relating to JIU recommendations by the end of 2025, with the aim of making it compatible with the criteria used by JIU so that factually correct information on the acceptance of JIU recommendations, based on the comments of CEB entities, is provided in the Secretary-General's notes on JIU reports.* The Secretariat notes that this recommendation is ultimately a matter for the CEB Secretariat and the JIU to consider. However, WHO does not find any issue with the current use of the CEB questionnaire terminology nor confusion between the different terms and their respective use by the JIU and by the CEB, recognizing that the questionnaire is non-committal about organizations' perspective. Moreover, the CEB consolidates all responses without attribution, whereas each organization officially enters its data into the JIU web-based tracking system.

20. *JIU recommendation 5: The executive heads of United Nations system organizations who have not yet done so should, with immediate effect and on a continuing basis, provide detailed comments and appropriate information, as well as supporting evidence on the implementation of*

accepted recommendations in the JIU web-based tracking system so as to allow the monitoring of their full implementation. The Secretariat has already implemented this recommendation and has been so acting for more than a decade. As an observation, WHO has been one of two agencies that have consistently entered the most detailed information into the JIU web-based tracking system.

21. *JIU recommendation 6: The executive heads of United Nations system organizations should, with immediate effect and on a continuing basis, ensure that detailed information and justification are provided in the JIU web-based tracking system for all JIU recommendations that are marked as “not accepted” or “not relevant”, and include this information in their periodic reporting to their legislative organs and governing bodies.* The Secretariat has already implemented this recommendation, and has been so acting for more than a decade. The Secretariat also supports the related informal JIU recommendation to change the “not relevant” category to “not applicable”.

Acceptance and implementation rates of JIU recommendations

22. JIU reports provide valuable syntheses of good practices and benchmarking across the United Nations system on topics covered by JIU reviews. At its previous meetings, the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee requested the Secretariat to add further detail on progress made in implementing recommendations made in previous JIU reports and to continue to pay close attention to the implementation of recommendations contained in JIU reports.⁶ The Secretariat continues to ensure that it follows up on all relevant JIU recommendations.

23. The Secretariat records its status updates for each individual JIU recommendation on the electronic platform for the JIU’s web-based tracking system and on WHO’s internal consolidated platform for tracking and managing recommendations and related dashboard. A full list of JIU recommendations relevant to WHO, together with the Secretariat’s implementation status and actions taken, is available through the consolidated recommendations dashboard on the Member States Portal of the WHO website.⁷

24. In the past year, the Secretariat has continued to make good progress in accepting and implementing recommendations made in JIU reports issued between 2017 and 2023 (see Annex).

25. As at 5 March 2025, WHO had implemented 90% of accepted recommendations made by the JIU during the period 2017–2023,⁸ which exceeds the overall implementation rate of 77% by all United Nations system organizations.⁹ During the same period, WHO’s acceptance of JIU recommendations remained high, at 87%, compared to the United Nations organizations’ average of 72%. In addition, in the past year, WHO fully implemented and closed two JIU reports issued in

⁶ See documents EB147/2, paragraph 24; EB151/2, paragraph 29; EB153/2, paragraph 24; and EB155/2 paragraph 23.

⁷ See the [Member States Portal](#) (accessed 31 March 2025).

⁸ The percentage of recommendations fully implemented by WHO stands at 100% for the 2017 and 2019 JIU reports; 95% for the 2018 reports; 95% for the 2020 reports; 96% for the 2021 reports; and 66% for the 2023 reports. One report relevant to WHO was issued in 2022 (JIU note on Review of measures and mechanisms for addressing racism and racial discrimination in United Nations system organizations: managing for achieving organizational effectiveness) with 60% of recommendations implemented.

⁹ The current reported implementation rate of 90% compares favourably with WHO’s reported implementation rate of 82% for JIU report recommendations issued between 2017 and 2022, as described in document EBPBAC38/6.

2021.¹⁰ As at the time of writing, WHO has fully closed all outstanding recommendations from JIU reports issued up to the end of 2017 and in 2019. Table 1 presents a list of reports issued more than two years ago containing open recommendations relevant to WHO for which implementation is under way.

Table 1. Open recommendations from JIU reports 2018–2023

Year	Report	Number of open recommendations (of total number of recommendations relevant to WHO)
2018	JIU/REP/2018/4 – Review of whistle-blower policies and practices in United Nations system organizations	1 (of 11)
2018	JIU/REP/2018/6 – Enhancing accessibility for persons with disabilities to conferences and meetings of the United Nations system	1 (of 10)
2020	JIU/REP/2020/1 – Review of the state of the investigative function: progress made in the United Nations system organizations in strengthening the investigation function	1 (of 10)
2020	JIU/REP/2020/8 – Review of mainstreaming environmental sustainability across organizations of the United Nations system	1 (of 10)
2021	JIU/REP/2021/6 – Business continuity management in United Nations system organizations	1 (of 6)
2022	JIU/NOTE/2022/1 – Review of measures and mechanisms for addressing racism and racial discrimination in the United Nations system organizations: managing for achieving organizational effectiveness	3 (of 6)
2023	JIU/REP/2023/3 – Review of accountability frameworks in the United Nations system organizations	2 (of 5)
2023	JIU/REP/2023/4 – Review of mental health and well-being policies and practices in the United Nations system organizations	4 (of 11)

26. Given the broad nature of JIU recommendations addressing all United Nations system organizations, the Secretariat interprets the meaning and relevance of individual recommendations in the context of WHO and its implementation of recommendations. Implementation rates are always lower for recently issued reports. The Secretariat also notes that several JIU recommendations go beyond WHO's remit and/or managerial control (with action often under the managerial control of the High-level Committee on Management of the CEB); in these cases, the Secretariat may consider the recommendations not to be relevant to WHO. The Secretariat also assigns implementation target dates to JIU recommendations, which is in line with the process followed for oversight recommendations issued by other offices. This practice ensures effective monitoring and reporting on JIU recommendations and facilitates the assessment of those that are effectively overdue.

27. The open recommendation on enhancing accessibility for persons with disabilities relates to conferences and meetings and is being addressed through the finalization of a new meetings and events module within WHO's enterprise resource planning system (Business Management System, BMS), which will include standardized accessibility requirements. As regards the need to mainstream environmental sustainability concerning field offices, the Secretariat is working to collect additional information and to plan together with other organizations in the United Nations

¹⁰ Documents JIU/REP/2021/4 (Review of the management of implementing partners in United Nations system organizations) and JIU/REP/2021/5 (Review of the ethics function in the United Nations system).

system. To close the one remaining recommendation from the JIU report on business continuity management – to implement the organizational resilience management system and its revised performance indicators – the Secretariat is finalizing the development of this system in line with its approved business continuity management framework, with completion expected by the end of 2025.

28. In addressing the JIU report on racism and racial discrimination, the Secretariat is progressing on each of the three remaining open recommendations, one of which falls very much under the responsibility of the CEB (common set of categories for voluntary self-identification by personnel). The other two concern recruitment, training and awareness, for which WHO's recruitment processes adhere to harmonized selection process guidelines which emphasize objectivity, transparency, diversity and accountability across all organizational levels. With regard to the accountability frameworks report, the Secretariat is using the suggested new framework as a guide as it revises the WHO Accountability Framework (2015). WHO provided significant technical support to the JIU report on mental health and well-being. It is moving towards the formal adoption of the United Nations System Workplace Mental Health and Well-being Strategy as an integral part of its organizational framework, as well as mapping and further implementation of psychosocial support capacity in all locations and progressively integrating mental health and well-being into managerial and workforce learning and development initiatives.

29. Two open recommendations, one from the 2018 whistle-blower policy and the other from 2020 investigation function reports, are the same, relating to the Member States-driven process to agree on procedures for handling and managing potential allegations against Directors-General. Following the decision¹¹ of the Executive Board at its 156th session, the Chairs of the Executive Board and the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee are working on a final draft of procedures, leading inclusive and transparent consultations with Member States, and will submit an updated final draft to the Seventy-eighth World Health Assembly through the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee at its current meeting.

30. In January 2024, the JIU released a report with its first review of governance and oversight of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF and UN-Women.¹² Although it did not look at WHO, the findings were relevant to the ongoing work of the WHO governing bodies, considering various reforms which were led by the former facilitators of the Agile Member States Task Group.¹³

Action by legislative/governing bodies

31. The following recommendations made in JIU reports issued during the period January 2024 – December 2024 are directed at the legislative organs and governing bodies of United Nations system organizations.

¹¹ Decision EB156(2) (2025).

¹² Document JIU/REP/2023/7.

¹³ Documents EB156/29, EB154/34, EB154/33 and EB154/33 Add.1.

Flexible working arrangements in United Nations systems organizations (document JIU/REP/2023/6)

32. *JIU recommendation 4: The legislative organs and governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations should request, by the end of 2025, that the executive heads provide, as part of reporting on human resources management, periodic updates on the implementation of flexible working arrangements and teleworking policies, including statistical data, disaggregated by gender and other relevant dimensions, with a view to ensuring data-driven and evidence-based decision-making on flexible working arrangements management.* The Secretariat notes that it consistently provides a human resources annual report to the Health Assembly and an update to the Executive Board. Both include reporting on flexible working arrangements.

Review of the use of non-staff personnel and related contractual modalities in the United Nations system organizations (document JIU/REP/2023/8)

33. *JIU recommendation 5: The legislative organs and governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations should request the executive heads who have not yet done so to include in their reports on human resources relevant data and information on the use of non-staff personnel, such as the number of non-staff personnel, years of service, location of employment, nationality and gender.* The Secretariat already includes data on its staff and non-staff workforce in its human resources reports to its governing bodies biannually (available on the Member States Portal of the WHO website). In addition, the Secretariat will consider improvements reflecting the level of detail described in this recommendation as part of the final modules to be implemented in the new Enterprise Resource Planning system. In the meantime, such level of details can be provided upon request as in the case of donor reports.

Review of consideration of and action taken on the reports and recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit by United Nations systems organizations (document JIU/REP/2024/2)

34. *JIU recommendation 2: The legislative organs and governing bodies of United Nations system organizations should, by the end of 2025, re-examine their processes for the consideration of JIU reports and recommendations, including their decision-making thereon and the monitoring of the implementation of JIU recommendations from previous years, by taking into account the good practice examples identified in the present report, as appropriate.* The Secretariat notes that, over the past several years, it has increased its follow-up to close older recommendations with considerable success, and increased the reporting details to the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee regarding open and closed recommendations and trend analysis. In addition, since 2024 the Independent Expert Oversight Advisory Committee routinely reviews implementation progress regarding the Secretariat's response to JIU reports, as well as any related issues surrounding given JIU reports and/or its workplan.

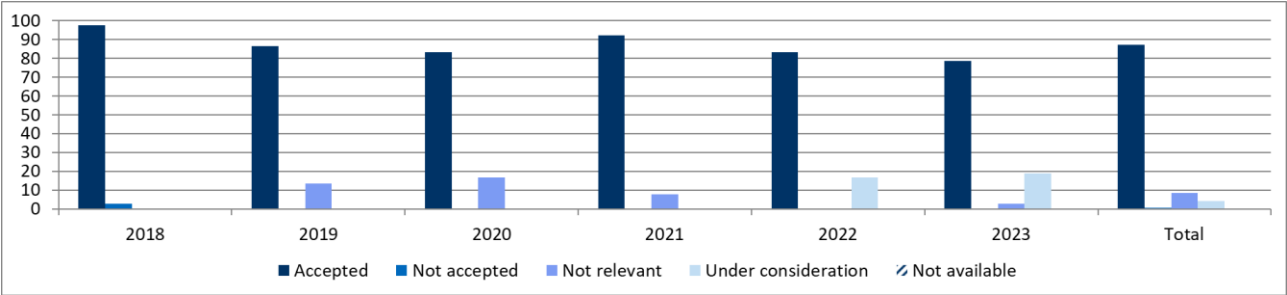
Action by the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee

35. The Committee is invited to note the report; it is further invited to consider and provide guidance and any follow-up suggestions regarding the recommendations contained in the JIU reports requiring action by WHO's legislative/governing bodies (paragraphs 32–34).

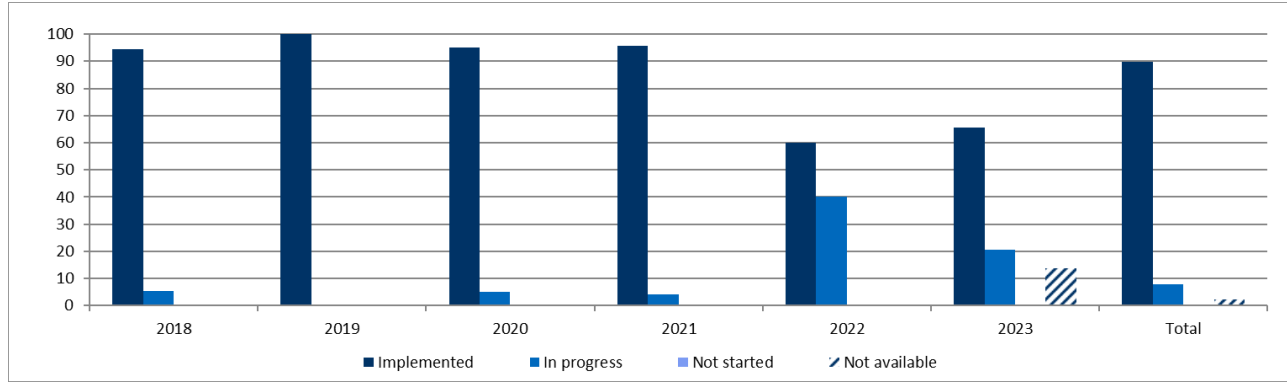
Annex

Rates of acceptance and implementation of recommendations by year, 2017–2023 (percentage)¹

Acceptance



Implementation



¹ Information extracted from the [JIU web-based tracking system](#) (accessed 26 March 2025).