



**OIOS**

Office of Internal Oversight Services

## **INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION**

# **AUDIT REPORT**

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## **Audit of the management of national staff grievances in MONUC**

**The procedures for recording and addressing national staff grievances are not adequate**

**19 June 2009**

**Assignment No. AP2008/620/04**

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United Nations  Nations Unies

INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

MEMORANDUM INTERIEUR

OFFICE OF INTERNAL OVERSIGHT SERVICES - BUREAU DES SERVICES DE CONTRÔLE INTERNE  
INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION - DIVISION DE L'AUDIT INTERNE

TO: Mr. Alan Doss  
A: Special Representative of the Secretary General  
MONUC

DATE: 19 June 2009

REFERENCE: IAD: 09-07575

*Fatoumata*  
FROM: Fatoumata Ndiaye, Acting Director  
DE: Internal Audit Division, OIOS

SUBJECT: Assignment No. AP2008/620/04 - Audit of the management of national staff grievances in  
OBJET: MONUC

1. I am pleased to present the report on the above-mentioned audit.
2. In order for us to close the recommendations in the OIOS database, we request that you provide us with the additional information as discussed in the text of the report and also summarized in Annex 1.
3. Please note that OIOS will report on the progress made to implement its recommendations, particularly those designated as high risk (i.e., recommendation 1) in its annual report to the General Assembly and semi-annual report to the Secretary-General.

cc: Mr. Hany Abdel-Aziz, Director of Mission Support, MONUC  
Mr. Amadu Kamara, Chief Administrative Services, MONUC  
Mr. Swatantra Goolsarran, Executive Secretary, UN Board of Auditors  
Mr. Jesus Lara Alonso, Officer-in-Charge, Joint Inspection Unit Secretariat  
Mr. Seth Adza, Chief, Audit Response Team, Department of Field Support  
Mr. Moses Bamuwanye, Chief, Oversight Support Unit, Department of Management  
Mr. Byung-Kun Min, Programme Officer, OIOS  
Ms. Eleanor T. Burns, Chief, Peacekeeping Audit Service, OIOS

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## INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

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### FUNCTION

*“The Office shall, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations examine, review and appraise the use of financial resources of the United Nations in order to guarantee the implementation of programmes and legislative mandates, ascertain compliance of programme managers with the financial and administrative regulations and rules, as well as with the approved recommendations of external oversight bodies, undertake management audits, reviews and surveys to improve the structure of the Organization and its responsiveness to the requirements of programmes and legislative mandates, and monitor the effectiveness of the systems of internal control of the Organization” (General Assembly Resolution 48/218 B).*

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Management of national staff grievances in MONUC**

OIOS conducted an audit of the management of national staff grievances in the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). The overall objective of the audit was to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of arrangements for recording and handling national staff grievances. The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

The MONUC Office of Mission Support generally took adequate measures to deal with national staff grievances. However, the procedures for recording and addressing grievances need to be improved, as follows:

- The statute of the National Staff Association (NASA) in MONUC was not approved by the Secretary-General. This could diminish the effectiveness of NASA and MONUC management in resolving staff grievances, tarnishing the reputation of the United Nations;
- Meetings between the NASA and MONUC management were not held frequently and a record of discussions was not maintained. This may result in issues not being addressed and failure to amicably resolve grievances;
- Various types of grievances have been addressed under different Secretary-General's bulletins, Administrative Instructions and Staff Regulations and Rules, and these documents were shared with staff. However, there was still a lack of clarity on certain procedures in reporting national staff grievances which may result in delays in their resolution leading to the low morale of staff; and
- Formal procedures were not developed for the handling of grievances by management. Also, there was no delegation of authority to facilitate the resolution of minor issues at the field office level. This may result in some of issues not being adequately addressed.

OIOS made a number of recommendations to address the issues identified during the audit and to further improve the management of national staff grievances.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the management of national staff grievances in the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). The audit was conducted in accordance with the *International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing*.

2. The National Staff Association (NASA) in MONUC was formed in 2004 in accordance with Regulation 8.1 of Article VIII of the Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations. The association was formed to represent the rights and interests of national staff. At the time of the audit the Mission had a total of 2,994 national staff. NASA had elected representatives for each field office and for each region within MONUC.

3. On 23 August 2007, NASA called for a work stoppage by the national staff. This decision was taken during a general assembly of national staff members as it was felt that there were some pending issues pertaining to the conditions of service of national staff that had not been addressed by the management.

4. In an effort to resolve the problems of MONUC national staff and similar issues in other missions, the officer-in-charge of the Department of Field Support (DFS) invited members of the management and national staff associations of MONUC and United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), as well as members of the United Nations Staff Union to participate in a working group to examine persistent problems which included a number of issues relating to national staff in peacekeeping operations and special political missions. The working group met in September 2007 and considered a wide range of issues relating to staffing, compensation, staff-management relations and other personnel matters. A number of recommendations were made and a follow-up meeting was held in December 2007 to report on actions taken.

5. Comments made by MONUC are shown in *italics*.

## II. AUDIT OBJECTIVES

6. The main objectives of the audit were to assess the:

- (a) Adequacy of procedures in place for recording national staff grievances;
  - (b) Efficiency and effectiveness of arrangements for handling national staff grievances; and
  - (c) Compliance with UN regulations, rules and policies.
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### **III. AUDIT SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY**

7. The audit focused on national staff grievances reported during the period 1 January 2007 to 31 December 2008. The audit included an assessment of the procedures for reporting grievances, interviews with key staff and a random sample of national staff, analysis of applicable data and a review of available documents and other relevant records.

### **IV. AUDIT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **A. Governance and coordination**

##### Non-approval of the statute of the National Staff Association

8. Regulation 8.1 (b) of the Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations indicates that the electoral process of the staff representative bodies must be agreed by the Secretary-General. NASA e-mailed its proposed statute to the Office of the Secretary-General on 31 July 2008 and is still waiting for a response. OIOS suggested that the NASA pro-actively follow-up with the Office of the Secretary-General to seek approval of its statute. Non-approval of the statute could diminish the effectiveness of NASA and management in resolving staff grievances. This in turn could negatively impact operations and tarnish the reputation of the United Nations.

##### **Recommendation 1**

**(1) The MONUC Office of Mission Support should further encourage the National Staff Association to follow up with the Office of the Secretary-General on approval of its statute.**

9. *The MONUC Office of Mission Support accepted recommendation 1 and stated that administration shares the concern of a lack of formal recognition of the statute of NASA and apparent lack of accepted democratic principles in NASA's operations, such as not holding scheduled general elections at least every two years. Informal efforts by Mission management to encourage NASA to seek regularization of its statute have been met by recalcitrance on the part of the NASA president. Management will pursue the matter by formally requesting NASA to seek authorization of its statute, and will solicit the assistance of the UNHQ staff association in this regard. Recommendation 1 remains open pending receipt of approval of the statute of the NASA from the Secretary-General.*

##### Infrequency of meetings between the National Staff Association and MONUC management

10. Following the meeting in New York of the working group which included representatives of MONUC management and NASA, it was agreed that the Chief Administrative Services (CAS) and NASA would meet regularly to

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discuss issues pertaining to national staff. Conflicting dates were provided by NASA and management as to the last meeting held in 2008. In addition, there was no record of the discussions held previously and follow-up actions to be implemented. While OIOS appreciates the initiative taken by NASA and management to meet regularly, the frequency of meetings needs to be formalized, discussions recorded and provision made for any follow-up on actions arising from the meetings. This would avoid any incidence of issues not being addressed that could adversely impact the amicable resolution of grievances.

### **Recommendation 2**

**(2) The MONUC Office of Mission Support should ensure that the frequency of meetings between management and the National Staff Association is formalized. In addition, issues discussed and any actions arising, including timetable and responsibilities should be recorded.**

11. *The MONUC Office of Mission Support accepted recommendation 2 and stated that Mission Support would issue a formal invitation for regularly scheduled meetings with NASA, and the decisions reached in meetings would be recorded.* Recommendation 2 remains open pending receipt of evidence of action taken to formalize the frequency of meetings between management and NASA, and the system for recording minutes of the meetings.

## **B. Mandate and mission of the National Staff Association**

### Adequacy of arrangements for input into the operations of NASA by its members

12. The objectives of NASA were clearly outlined in its proposed statute. OIOS sent a questionnaire to a sample of twenty staff representatives within the field offices to determine whether they were given the opportunity to provide input into documents governing the operations of NASA and whether input given was adequately reflected. An analysis of responses received showed that the majority felt that they had input into the statute and financial regulation of NASA and that their suggestions were given due consideration.

### Adequacy of mechanism in place for dissemination of information to national staff members

13. The Mission's broadcast facility was used to circulate information to national staff members on a regular basis. In accordance with their proposed statute, NASA had also established Special Commissions in various field offices to disseminate information to national staff and to mobilize staff. A review of broadcasts sent to national staff showed that members were kept abreast of the activities of NASA and the outcomes of any discussions held with management.

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## **C. Policies and procedures**

### Lack of guidelines for reporting grievances

14. Various types of grievances had been addressed under different Secretary-General's bulletins, Administrative Instructions and Staff Regulations and Rules. OIOS was pleased to note that at MONUC the Conduct and Discipline Unit provided staff with information on the relevant UN documents dealing with particular issues. However, there was a lack of clarity on the procedures to be followed when there was a grievance, as there was still insufficient information to guide staff. The unapproved constitution of NASA also does not provide a process for dealing with grievances and their presentation to management.

15. The lack of guidelines for reporting a number of staff grievances may result in delays in their resolution or non-presentation of some grievances to management to facilitate resolution. This could eventually lead to poor employee morale which could have an adverse impact on the operations of the Mission.

### **Recommendation 3**

**(3) The MONUC Office of Mission Support should assist in the development of written guidelines for reporting staff grievances and widely circulate them among the national staff to ensure the effective resolution of grievances.**

16. *The MONUC Office of Mission Support accepted recommendation 3 in principle and stated that management would like to stress that channels and procedures already exist for all staff members of the United Nations to report and express their grievances. In addition to these, management was also predisposed to addressing national staff grievances that are brought to its attention by NASA. Nevertheless, the management was willing to offer assistance to NASA in developing guidelines for the reporting of national staff grievances, within the context of the other existing mechanisms. Recommendation 3 remains open pending confirmation of the assistance provided to NASA to develop guidelines for reporting national staff grievances.*

### Lack of formal procedures in place by management for dealing with grievances

17. Grievances may be reported to a plethora of persons - NASA and through NASA, to the CAS as the administrative focal point, to the Security Section, the Conduct and Discipline Unit, the Investigations Division of OIOS and in the field offices, to the concerned Administrator or Head of Office.

18. The CAS was the administrative focal point for dealing with NASA on issues pertaining to national staff. There were no formal procedures for management's handling of grievances, with the resolution of grievances often done through mediation and intervention by the CAS. There was neither categorization of grievances nor delegation of authority to resolve minor issues arising at field offices. In OIOS' view, the lack of formal procedures to be

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implemented by management when dealing with grievances may result in some issues not being addressed contributing to poor morale of staff.

**Recommendation 4**

**(4) The MONUC Office of Mission Support should develop a more formal procedure for dealing with grievances. Moreover, the process for grievance resolution should be decentralized to ensure that minor issues are resolved by the management of field offices.**

19. *The MONUC Office of Mission Support accepted recommendation 4 and stated that while management agreed that the handling of national staff grievances should be formalized by recording such grievances and their method of disposition, the management was of the view that the actual processing of such cases should remain informal in certain circumstances. Experience had shown that the disposition of numerous grievance cases was best achieved with informal intervention and mediation. It would be counterproductive to duplicate the existing formal mechanisms for addressing staff grievances. Nevertheless, the management agreed that grievances should be resolved at the lowest level possible, which by logical implication would constitute decentralization of the grievance resolution process as well. Recommendation 4 remains open pending receipt of the procedures developed by management for dealing with grievances both at Mission HQ and at field offices.*

**D. Monitoring of staff grievances**

Lack of a formal tracking mechanism for monitoring grievances

20. The status of the recommendations approved by the meeting of the working group of members of management and national staff associations in September 2007 was discussed during a follow-up meeting of the group in December 2007. It was reported that the Field Personnel Division (FPD), DFS had either completed or was in the process of taking action to implement all recommendations with the exception of the recommendations on overtime and the inclusion of staff representatives in joint panels.

21. An update from management and NASA on the implementation of the recommendations of the working group showed that there were conflicting views on whether some of the recommendations had been implemented. Because of lack of a mechanism to record and monitor grievances and actions taken, it was difficult to establish the types of grievances received by management, the date reported and the date of any action taken. A tracking mechanism would facilitate discussions with the NASA and assist in the timely resolution of grievances.

**Recommendation 5**

**(5) The MONUC Office of Mission Support should develop a formal tracking mechanism for monitoring the**

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**national staff grievances. This should include the type of grievance, the date reported and the date action was taken.**

22. *The MONUC Office of Mission Support accepted recommendation 5 and stated that management will seek to establish the required mechanism. Recommendation 5 remains open pending receipt of evidence of the development of a tracking mechanism for monitoring national staff grievances.*

## **V. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

23. We wish to express our appreciation to the Management and staff of MONUC for the assistance and cooperation extended to the auditors during this assignment.

## STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Recom. no.	Recommendation	Risk category	Risk rating	C/O <sup>1</sup>	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date <sup>2</sup>
1	The MONUC Office of Mission Support should further encourage the National Staff Association to follow up with the Office of the Secretary-General on approval of its statute.	Compliance	High	O	Receipt of a copy of approved statute of the National Staff Association.	15 July 2009
2	The MONUC Office of Mission Support should ensure that the frequency of meetings between management and the National Staff Association is formalized. In addition, issues discussed and any actions arising, including timetable and responsibilities should be recorded.	Operational	Medium	O	Receipt of evidence of action taken to formalize the frequency of meetings between management and the system for recording the minutes of the meetings.	15 July 2009
3	The MONUC Office of Mission Support should assist in the development of written guidelines for reporting staff grievances and widely circulate them among the national staff to ensure the effective resolution of grievances.	Operational	medium	O	Receipt of a copy of the guidelines developed for reporting national staff grievances.	31 July 2009
4	The MONUC Office of Mission Support should develop a more formal procedure for dealing with grievances. Moreover, the process for grievance resolution should be decentralized to ensure that minor issues are resolved by field offices.	Operational	Medium	O	Receipt of the procedures developed for dealing with grievances both at Mission HQ and at the field and section level.	31 July 2009
5	The MONUC Office of Mission Support should develop a formal tracking mechanism for monitoring national staff grievances. This should include the type of grievance, the date reported and the date action was taken.	Operational	Medium	O	Receipt of evidence of the development of a tracking mechanism for monitoring national staff grievances.	31 July 2009

1. C = closed, O = open

2. Date provided by MONUC in response to recommendations.