

Program and Budget Committee

Thirty-Ninth Session
Geneva, June 16 to 20, 2025

REPORT BY THE WIPO INDEPENDENT ADVISORY OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE (IAOC)

prepared by the WIPO Independent Advisory Oversight Committee (IAOC)

1. This document contains the Report by the WIPO Independent Advisory Oversight Committee (IAOC), prepared by the IAOC and covering the period from March 23, 2024 to March 28, 2025.

2. The following decision paragraph is proposed:

3. *The Program and Budget Committee (PBC) recommended to the WIPO General Assembly to take note of the “Report by the WIPO Independent Advisory Oversight Committee (IAOC)” (document WO/PBC/39/2).*

[Report by the WIPO Independent
Advisory Oversight Committee follows]

ANNUAL REPORT BY THE WIPO
INDEPENDENT ADVISORY OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE (IAOC)
FOR THE PERIOD MARCH 23, 2024 TO MARCH 28, 2025
[MAY 27, 2025]

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Pursuant to its Terms of Reference (ToR), the WIPO Independent Advisory Oversight Committee (IAOC) submits an annual report to the Program and Budget Committee (PBC) and to the WIPO General Assembly.
2. The IAOC (also referred to as “the Committee”) was established in 2005. It is a subsidiary body of the WIPO General Assembly and of the PBC. It serves in an independent expert advisory capacity and assists the Assembly and the PBC in fulfilling their oversight responsibilities.
3. The present report covers the period from March 23, 2024 to March 28, 2025. Section II of this report provides an overview of the Committee’s quarterly sessions, composition of the Committee and working methods. Section III details matters discussed and reviewed by the Committee during the reporting period.

II. QUARTERLY SESSIONS, COMPOSITION AND WORKING METHODS

Quarterly Sessions

4. During the reporting period, the Committee held four quarterly sessions: from May 28 to 31, 2024 (73rd session); from September 24 to 27, 2024 (74th session); from December 9 to 13, 2024 (75th session); and from March 24 to 28, 2025 (76th session). In line with its ToR, the Committee held information meetings with representatives of Member States following all sessions. The reports for all of the Committee’s sessions are published on WIPO’s website.

Composition and Selection Process for New Members

5. The IAOC comprises seven members drawn from WIPO’s Groups of Member States. These members serve in their personal capacity and independently of Member States. The Committee elected, at its 75th session in December 2024, Mr. David Kanja as Chair and Mr. Kamlesh Vikamsey as Vice-Chair in accordance with its ToR. Mr. Bert Keuppens was the Chair, presiding over the 72nd to 75th sessions, with Mr. Kanja as Vice-Chair.
6. In accordance with the selection process described in Annex IV, WIPO Financial Regulations and Rules, the Committee currently consists of the following members:
 - Mr. David Kanja, Chair (African Group);
 - Mr. Kamlesh Vikamsey, Vice-Chair (Asia and the Pacific Group);
 - Mr. Bert Keuppens (Group B);
 - Mr. Danil Kerimi (Group of Central Asian, Caucasus and Eastern European States (CACEEC));
 - Mr. Igors Ludboržs (Group of Central European and Baltic States (CEBS));
 - Mr. Guan Jian (China); and
 - Mr. German Deffit (Group of Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC)).
7. The composition of the Committee reflects a proper mix and balance of skills, expertise, and experience.
8. the Committee requested, during its 76th session, an update from the Secretary of the Selection Panel on the status of the selection process for new members of the IAOC. The Committee had completed its assessment of the eligible candidates using an evaluation matrix that was provided by the Selection Panel and upon which the IAOC had been consulted. The

Committee also had a discussion with the Secretary of the Selection Panel on possible future enhancements to the selection process of eligible candidates.

Working Methods

9. The Committee provides expert advice through its engagement with WIPO's Director General, Secretariat staff and the External Auditor, mainly based on reports, presentations, and information with which it is provided. It further deliberates on relevant matters to reach its assessments and conclusions.

10. During the reporting period, the Committee had briefings with either the Director General or the Assistant Director General, Administration, Finance and Management Sector, on key developments, including: the successful adoption of two new treaties; the stable financial performance by WIPO in the broader context of financial strain across the United Nations (UN) system; developments within the UN system connected to financing and multilateralism; the Secretariat's plans for preparing the budget for the next biennium; and the Organization's efforts to elevate intellectual property (IP) policy discussions to the ministerial and leadership levels.

IAOC Self-Assessment

11. During its 75th session, the Committee conducted an annual self-assessment exercise in accordance with the requirements in its ToR. The Committee based its self-assessment on the 13 Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) criteria for good practices for Audit and Oversight Committees in the UN system organizations and concluded that it was functioning effectively and discharging its mandate in line with the best practices within the UN system. The details of this assessment are attached to the report on the Committee's 75th session.

12. The Committee also requested the Secretariat to provide feedback on the functioning of the Committee. The Secretariat's overall evaluation was one of appreciation for the Committee's contributions. Specific items where the Committee's contributions were appreciated included: (i) strengthening of the investment governance framework; (ii) advice on all fiduciary issues; (iii) focus on risk management; (iv) suggestions to strengthen and reform IOD; (v) follow-up on oversight recommendations; and (vi) engagement with Member States. The Secretariat also mentioned concerns regarding duplication in some oversight work and the desire for an improved scheduling of the items in the agenda of Committee meetings, considering other commitments of the Secretariat, and a clearer communication of what needed to be prepared as background information for Committee meetings.

13. The Committee decided that an external assessment exercise would also be conducted in 2025 using the mechanism of a UN peer review, which has been piloted successfully in one UN Organization. This assessment will be conducted in accordance with the requirement in the Committee's ToR regarding periodic independent performance evaluations.

III. MATTERS DISCUSSED AND REVIEWED

A. Internal Oversight

Implementation of IOD's 2024 Internal Oversight Workplan

14. The Committee reviewed the implementation of the 2024 Oversight Annual Workplan using quarterly Internal Oversight Division (IOD) activity reports that were submitted for each session. The Committee also reviewed, during its 76th session, IOD's draft 2024 Annual Report and noted that the Division issued the following reports during 2024: five internal audit reports, two validation reports, four evaluation reports, five pre-evaluation review reports, one advisory report, 18 investigation reports, and two Management Implication Reports. IOD also made 37 recommendations and closed 66 recommendations during the reporting period.

15. The Committee noted that some staff vacancies had been filled in the Audit and Investigation Sections, and two key positions were still vacant in the Evaluation Section. The Committee was informed that those vacancies would be advertised in 2025, after a revision of the relevant job descriptions. The Committee was also informed that despite challenges in staffing key positions, IOD was expected to deliver on its workplan for 2024, with the exception of one evaluation that was deferred to the first quarter of 2025. The IAOC welcomed the changes that had taken place in IOD and appreciated the efforts that had been made to re-orient the activities of the Division.

Proposed IOD 2025 Internal Oversight Workplan

16. The Committee reviewed IOD's 2025 Internal Oversight Workplan during its 75th session. The Committee noted that the workplan was prepared after consultation with internal stakeholders and Member States and took into account feedback provided by the Risk Management Group, and the results of IOD's Risk Assessment. The Committee welcomed the new format and provided some preliminary inputs into the Workplan. The Committee also welcomed the inclusion in the Workplan of the rendering of an opinion issued by IOD to support WIPO's Statement on Internal Control.

Internal and External Quality Assessments of IOD Activities

17. During its 75th and 76th sessions, the Committee reviewed the first-ever United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Peer Review of WIPO's evaluation function that was conducted between October 2024 and January 2025. The review concluded that this function was underperforming as previously reported by the Committee. The Committee previously made a number of related observations, including the need for a more strategic orientation of the evaluation function. The Committee also noted that a management action plan was developed for addressing the recommendations from the peer review.

18. The Committee also reviewed, during its 76th session, IOD's periodic self-assessments of its internal audit and investigation functions, which were conducted in preparation for the external quality assessments that are scheduled for the fourth quarter of 2025. The assessments concluded that the internal audit function was in conformity with global internal audit standards, and the investigation function was in conformity with standards from the Conference of Internal Investigators. The Committee discussed the timing and approach of the next external quality assessments of the internal audit and investigation functions and agreed to revisit this topic at its next session with IOD.

Update on the Preparation of IOD's Opinion on Governance, Risk Management and Controls at WIPO

19. During its 76th session, the Committee reviewed an update on the ongoing preparation of the IOD's opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of governance, risk management and controls at WIPO, which will support the Organization's annual Statement on Internal Control. The Committee noted that the framework for IOD's opinion was based on practices in other UN organizations and inspired by the Institute of Internal Auditors' Global Internal Audit Standards. The Committee further discussed the need for the focus of IOD's opinion to be aligned with the opinion on the Statement on Internal Control that is provided by the Director General. The Committee welcomed the preparation of the IOD's 2025 opinion, which was the culmination of discussions that had been held by the Committee for many years.

Proposed Internal Oversight Policies and Manuals

20. The Committee reviewed: a revised IOD investigation manual during its 73rd session; a revised internal audit manual during its 74th session; and a revised internal audit policy during its 75th session. The Director, IOD, informed the Committee that the proposed revisions of the internal audit manual and internal audit policy were aimed at ensuring that both documents were aligned with the new 2024 Global Internal Audit Standards and the updated Internal Oversight Charter.

Internal Audit Reports

21. The Committee reviewed, together with IOD and the Secretariat, reports on the six internal audit engagements that are listed below. Some of the reports were published in unredacted format on WIPO's website, in line with IOD's Report Publication Policy (IOD/PP/2021).

- Validation of WIPO's Performance Report 2022/23 (WO/PBC/37/8)
- Validation of After-Service Health Insurance (ASHI) Claims Data (IA 2024-01)
- Audit of Cybersecurity Management (IA 2024-02)
- IOD Review of Key Controls Design and Operating Effectiveness at WIPO (IA 2024-03)
- Internal Audit of the WIPO Nigeria Office (IA 2024-05)
- Audit of the PCT Translation Division (IA 2024-04)

Evaluation Reports

22. The Committee reviewed, together with IOD and the Secretariat, four evaluation reports, one advisory report and six pre-evaluation reviews that are listed below. Some of the reports were published in unredacted format on WIPO's website, in line with IOD's Report Publication Policy (IOD/PP/2021).

- Combined audit and evaluation of PCT Operations and Customer Relations – Part II – Verification of the PCT Culture of Customer Service (EVAL 2022-05)
- Pre-evaluation review of Madrid Fellowship Programs (EVAL 2023-02)
- Evaluation of Chobe Baskets Project (Learning from the Implementation of WIPO's Initiatives aimed at Empowering Women Entrepreneurs) (EVAL 2023-02)
- Evaluation of the Project on Increasing the Role of Women in Innovation and Entrepreneurship (EVAL 2023-02)
- Evaluation of Indigenous and Local Community Women Entrepreneurship Program (WEP), (Report II), (EVAL 2023-02)
- Pre-evaluation review of WIPO Academy Academic Institutions and Executive Program (EVAL 2023-03)
- Pre-evaluation review of WIPO Fellowship Programs (EVAL 2023-05)

- Pre-evaluation review of WIPO Connect (EVAL 2024-01)
- Pre-evaluation review of WIPO Academy IP eLearning Section (EVAL 2024-04)
- Advisory Report on Enterprise Collaboration and Content Management (EVAL 2024-06)
- Pre-evaluation review of the Division for Latin America and the Caribbean (EVAL 2024-07)

23. During its 74th session, the Committee noted that pre-evaluation reviews were appreciated by the Sectors concerned and contributed to the understanding of the activities that were reviewed and resulted in recommendations for improvement that were accepted by the Sectors. The Committee was also informed that the reviews were aimed at assessing the evaluability of selected programs and thus did not represent a substitute for evaluations. The Committee further noted that IOD intended, in the future, to conduct fully fledged evaluations of significant workstreams within the Organization.

Investigations

24. In accordance with the Internal Oversight Charter, at each session, the Committee was apprised on the status of investigation cases and caseload trends, providing a breakdown of complaints received and complaints substantiated by category of misconduct. In all cases involving a potential conflict of interest on the part of IOD, the Committee reviewed each case in detail and provided advice accordingly. The Committee also discussed with the Legal Counsel at its 76th session, procedures for dealing with repeat, frivolous, vexatious complaints which may put a heavy administrative burden on the Organization.

25. The Committee took note, during its 73rd session, of the revised working procedures to handle incoming allegations, which involved an initial screening process to determine whether they can be referred to other internal justice system functions (e.g., Ethics, Ombuds, Human Resources and Mediation) for appropriate action. At the 76th session of the Committee, IOD reported that, as of March 21, 2025, there were eight pending investigation matters comprising two ongoing investigations, four matters under preliminary evaluation and two matters on hold.

Private sessions

26. The Committee met in private sessions with the Director, IOD, in accordance with its ToR.

B. External Audit

External Auditor Sessions

27. At its 73rd session, the Committee discussed with the incoming External Auditor, the Audit Board of the Republic of Indonesia, their engagement activities and provided input into their audit planning.

28. During its 73rd session, the Committee met with the representatives of the outgoing External Auditor, the National Audit Office of the United Kingdom. These representatives presented to the Committee, with management in attendance, their audit report and long-form report on the audit of WIPO's 2023 financial statements. The representatives also highlighted to the Committee the key audit findings, as described in their Audit Completion Report. The Committee followed up on the actuarial assumptions relating to ASHI and other pertinent issues. The Committee also took note of the unqualified opinion relating to the presentation of the Financial Statements, the regularity of WIPO revenues and expenses. The Committee further noted that the External Auditor identified a number of improvement opportunities and did not make any new recommendations.

29. The Committee met with representatives of the new External Auditor, the Audit Board of the Republic of Indonesia, during its 74th, 75th, and 76th sessions. During the Committee's 74th session, the External Auditor presented the Audit Planning Memorandum (APM) for the audit of WIPO's 2024 Financial Statements. The APM included details on the processes for conducting the planned financial and performance audits. The Committee provided feedback on aspects that were covered by the APM, including on materiality and the scope of the audits. The Committee also enquired about the handover and takeover from the previous auditor, and the new External Auditor expressed satisfaction with the details discussed with the outgoing External Auditor, including follow-up of the outstanding recommendations.

30. During the Committee's 75th session, the External Auditor provided an update on the status of external audit arrangements and plans for the upcoming year. The External Auditor also indicated that the previous External Auditor issued 41 audit recommendations, of which 35 were implemented, and six remained in progress. The Auditor and the Committee also discussed the timelines as well as the key areas for the audit. The Committee stressed the importance of a number of audit areas, including the ASHI liability, investments, and the External Auditor's performance audits and opinion on compliance.

31. The Committee reviewed, during its 76th session, an update that was provided by the External Auditors on the status of the 2024 financial and performance audits. The update indicated that the financial audit had covered a number of areas including walkthroughs of the ERP system, reperformance of the 2024 unaudited financial statements, review of disclosures, tests of financial and IT controls, follow-up on prior-year recommendations and IPSAS compliance. It also indicated that the fieldwork for the performance audit was completed on March 14, 2025, evaluated the effectiveness of WIPO's program management, and covered four WIPO divisions. The Committee discussed the financial audit approach and scope, audit standards, timelines for the completion of the audit report, and preliminary audit findings and recommendations. The External Auditors also provided an update on their ongoing monitoring of prior audit recommendations and the implementation status of the recommendations.

Private sessions

32. The Committee met in private sessions with the External Auditor in accordance with its ToR.

C. Financial Reporting

2024 WIPO Financial Statements

33. The Committee reviewed, during its 76th session, the draft financial report and financial statements for the year ended December 31, 2024. The Organization reported a total surplus of 140 million Swiss francs, including an investment gain of 74 million Swiss francs. Total revenue was 497 million Swiss francs and total expenses amounted to 430 million Swiss francs, making for an operating surplus of 66 million Swiss francs. The market value of WIPO's investment portfolios also increased, with the Core portfolio reaching 931 million Swiss francs and the Strategic portfolio valued at 274 million Swiss francs.

34. The Committee provided comments regarding valuation of investments, the estimation of the ASHI liability, and improvement of the notes to the financial statements. The Committee discussed the underlying ASHI assumptions with WIPO's actuary and received requested clarifications. The Committee was also informed that the financial statements would include a disclosure of a post-balance sheet event related to the establishment of a separate entity as a

multi-employer plan for the financing of employee benefit liabilities in which WIPO and the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV) would participate.

Changes to Accounting Policies and Standards

35. The Committee was briefed, during its 75th session, about new International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) that WIPO was analyzing for implementation. The standards that were expected to impact WIPO included IPSAS 45 (property, plant and equipment), IPSAS 46 (measurement), IPSAS 47 (revenue), and IPSAS 48 (transfer expenses).

36. The Committee was also updated on WIPO's plans to conduct an actuarial assessment for ASHI, which would include a full medical claims review through 2024. The Committee was also briefed about a possible 2024 post-balance sheet disclosure for the separate multi-employer entity. The Committee expressed interest in reviewing the assumptions being used by the actuary in determining the ASHI liability in view of its extreme sensitivity.

Investment Governance Framework and Policies

37. The Committee was briefed, at its 75th session, on the updates to the Investment Governance Framework. The Committee was informed that one external investment expert was appointed to the Advisory Committee on Investments (ACI) and a second expert had been identified and would shortly join that committee. The Committee noted the progress on the implementation of the World Bank (RAMP) recommendations.

38. The Committee advised the Secretariat to undertake an update of the investment policy, including a review of the investment objectives and corresponding performance targets, considering financial market conditions and economic outlook.

D. Risk Management and Internal Controls

Updates on Risk Management and Internal Control Processes

39. The Committee received a briefing, during its 73rd session, on issues relating to risk management and internal controls, the JIU Progress Report, new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) Systems, and anti-fraud matters. The Committee enquired about a number of issues, including the governance arrangements for the new ERP systems, and requested Management to provide further updates on the governance of the procurement and implementation of the new ERP system. The Committee also reviewed an updated assessment of risks in the organization's heat-map and noted that cybersecurity continued to be a top risk.

40. The Committee reviewed an update, during its 74th session, on risk management and internal controls, including IOD's plans to provide an overall opinion on governance, risk management and internal controls. The Committee was informed that changes would be made to the internal controls framework to reflect recommendations made by the External or Internal Auditors. It was also assured that the internal controls and risk frameworks that were being used by the Organization were in line with the relevant frameworks issued by the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations (COSO).

41. The Committee reviewed, during its 76th session, an update on WIPO's risk management and internal control framework (including top risks), outlining various developments as of March 2025. The Committee was briefed about a revised risk management policy, risk appetite statement, and terms of reference for the Risk Management Group. The Committee also discussed the top ten risks on WIPO's heat map together with the related risk responses. These risks included: geopolitical risk; fall in value of investments; strategic AI opportunities; and AI data

integrity, privacy and governance. The IOD Director also indicated that the results of the risk assessment were being used in audit planning.

Update on Cybersecurity Management and Information Assurance

42. At the 73rd session, the Committee met with the Director, IOD, the Acting Chief Security Officer and other senior members of the Management Team to discuss the final report on the audit of cybersecurity management, which was conducted between March and May 2024. The engagement was conducted under IOD's supervision and involved the review of WIPO's information security framework, an assessment of cybersecurity maturity assessment and the conduct of penetration testing.

43. The Committee was informed that WIPO has implemented security measures that are aligned with industry best practices, particularly those outlined in International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 27001. Five observations, eight recommendations and two points for improvement were made. Overall, the audit ranked WIPO's Cybersecurity Maturity Assessment between levels "4 – Quantitatively Managed" and "5 – Optimizing", demonstrating that a robust set of fundamental security processes and tools have been defined and enforced. All recommendations were discussed and agreed upon with Management.

44. The Committee stressed the importance of vigilance for the rapidly developing cybersecurity landscape, particularly during the time of external (Artificial intelligence (AI) driven) and internal (Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) implementation) technological evolution. The Committee also indicated that it would continue to monitor the matter.

45. At the 74th session, the Committee received an information security update on strategy implementation, and ISO 27001 Certification Audit, and recent incidents/events. The Committee provided comments on actions being taken to address the risks related to the CrowdStrike outage of July 2024, and the vishing/phone spoofing of August 2024. The Committee also looked forward to receiving future updates on lessons learned from those incidents and measures to mitigate related risks.

46. During its 76th session, the Committee reviewed an update from the Chief Security Officer (CSO) on security and information assurance. The Committee highlighted the importance of this matter and requested the Secretariat to continue submitting comprehensive updates periodically. The CSO indicated that the Information Security Management System in WIPO is mature, as confirmed by external experts in 2024. The Committee discussed a number of related issues, including critical risks, significant security incidents, compliance status, progress on the strategic program, resource adequacy, physical safety and security, and the possibility of conducting an external maturity assessment in 2026.

Update on the Implementation of the new ERP System

47. The Committee reviewed updates on the implementation of the new ERP System during its 74th, 75th and 76th sessions. During its 74th session, the Committee reviewed the governance framework of the implementation of the new system. The Secretariat reported that expenditure of an estimated 1.7 million Swiss francs out of the total budget of 2.9 million Swiss francs, about 60 per cent of the preparatory phase I budget, had been spent and there had not been expenditure on the phase II implementation budget. The Committee appreciated that line functions of the Organization were involved at the conceptualization stage of the project. The timing of the implementation was broadly on target and expected to start in January 2025. The governance framework was in place and the Committee made suggestions for input from consultants and oversight bodies to be reflected in the framework.

48. During the Committee's 75th session, the Secretariat indicated that the selection of the vendor had been completed and final negotiations, before signing the contract, were underway. The implementation, scheduled to begin in Q1 of 2025, involved a six-month design phase, detailed resource planning, and process mapping, with the new system starting to be operational by Q4 of 2025, with the employee performance element. The Committee was aware of the many challenges that such a project underwent. The Secretariat indicated that the organizational arrangements were adequate to handle any challenges.

49. The Committee reviewed, during its 76th session, an update that outlined implementation progress as of March 2025. The update indicated that the initiative was advancing according to the schedule and was at the design stage. The Committee discussed a number of issues, including the need for a comprehensive masterplan with timelines, periodic updates, and the assessment of risks together with foreseen mitigation action plans. The Committee looks forward to receiving further briefings on the subsequent stages of the project.

Update on Procurement

50. During its 74th session, the Committee reviewed an update on procurement that included information on the discussion of sustainability that was undertaken by Member States in the Program and Budget Committee (PBC). The PBC agreed that the application of sustainability in procurement should not be undertaken to the disadvantage of developing, least-developed countries or economies in transition. The Committee was informed that this requirement was now being applied, and the procurement manual was under revision to reflect this.

Update on the Effectiveness of Anti-Fraud Activities

51. The Committee reviewed, during its 76th session, an update on anti-fraud activities that included details on the Organization's anti-fraud framework, WIPO's policies on preventing and detecting fraud, and an ongoing Fraud Risk Assessment that was being conducted by an external expert. The Committee advised the management to look for enhanced anti-fraud digital tools, strengthen internal communication, and measurements of the effectiveness of anti-fraud activities.

Update on Data Governance

52. During its 75th session, the Committee received an update on data governance from the Chief Security Officer and the Chief Information Officer. Data Governance was an emerging issue that was being addressed by the hiring of a Chief Data Officer, the development of a Data Governance Strategy and a heightened focus on data security and privacy. Data is a critical asset and resource for the Organization which, according to the Committee, deserves the highest level of attention from senior leadership. The Committee looks forward to receiving a further briefing when the new data strategy is ready.

Update On WIPO's Stance on Interdependence and Interaction Between Artificial Intelligence and Intellectual Property, Including Internal Implementation and Deployment

53. The Committee received, during its 74th session, a briefing and update on the interdependence and interaction between AI and IP, including the internal implementation and deployment of initiatives. WIPO has developed several tools, established a task force to address the issues of AI, and issued staff guidance on the responsible use of AI in the Organization. The Committee very much appreciated the prominent role played by WIPO in this respect and encouraged continued attention and support for the matter within the Organization.

E. Implementation of Oversight Recommendations

54. The Committee reviewed, during each of its sessions, the status of outstanding oversight recommendations made by IOD, the External Auditor and the JIU. The Committee took note of additions and closures of recommendations and also focused its attention on high-priority recommendations that had remained outstanding for long periods of time.

55. The Committee noted, during its 74th session, the interest expressed to provide information to Member States on the progress being made on the implementation of all outstanding recommendations in a format that was accessible to Member States. During its 76th session, the Committee reviewed an IOD report on the status of outstanding oversight recommendations as of March 14, 2025. A total of 23 recommendations remained open, reflecting a notable reduction from 30 in December 2024. Since the last update, 15 recommendations were closed, including two high-priority, 10 medium, and three low-priority items, some of which had been outstanding since 2023. The average age of open items had improved, and continuous engagement with recommendation owners was contributing to steady progress in implementation and closure.

56. The status of open recommendations represents remarkable progress in comparison to earlier periods where, for instance, the number of outstanding recommendations in November 2022 amounted to 97. The Committee noted that JIU recommendations were not included in the analysis for the 76th session and requested that they be included in future reports.

F. Ethics and Ombudsperson

Ethics Office

57. The Committee met, at its 73rd session, with the Interim Chief Ethics Officer to discuss his ongoing activities and expressed its appreciation for his continued support of this important function during the transition period.

58. During its 74th session, the Committee received a briefing from the new Chief Ethics Officer on the progress of the Office's workplan in early 2024, and on her own individual workplan for the period of August to December 2024. The Committee noted the focus on the following four key objectives: providing advice and guidance on ethical issues to WIPO personnel, increasing ethical awareness, monitoring ethics policies and setting standards, and managing the activities and resources of the Ethics Office. The workplans further emphasized the collaboration with internal stakeholders and addressing recommendations from oversight bodies. The Committee was also assured that the transition had indeed facilitated a smooth handover between the Chief Ethics Office *ad interim* and the new Chief Ethics Officer. The Committee welcomed the functioning of the Office and supported the ongoing development of the function.

59. During its 75th session, the Committee reviewed an update on the 2024 activities of the Ethics Office. The update indicated that the Office had received a total of 164 advisory requests during 2024, and there was a considerable increase in requests for advice since the arrival of the new Chief Ethics Officer on August 1, 2024. The majority of these requests were related to outside activities, retaliation and/or reprisals, standards of conduct, and other ethics advice. The Chief Ethics Officer had also completed a number of training activities and outreach events, and further developed an annual workplan for 2025, which was discussed with the Committee. The 2025 Workplan included the review of the: policy on outside activities as well as the Financial Disclosure and Declaration of Interests (FDDI) Guidelines. The workplan also included a review of the Ethics Office's terms of reference. The longer-term biennial plan for 2026/2027 was also discussed.

60. The Committee reviewed, during its 76th session, an update from the Chief Ethics Officer highlighting an increase in advisory activities regarding 74 requests for advice received between December 2024 and February 2025. The most common topics covered in these requests included outside activities, workplace conflicts, and other ethical issues. The Committee discussed the follow-up of the status of open recommendations, the introduction of new IP related disclosure requirements, progress in implementation of the workplan, the modalities for periodic independent quality assurance reviews of the Ethics Office, and the status of retaliation cases. The Committee looks forward to reviewing during its next session the 2024 annual report of the Ethics Office. The Committee also appreciated the contribution of the Ethics Office and welcomed its effective and efficient functioning.

Ombudsperson

61. During its 73rd session, the Committee reviewed the draft annual report of the Ombuds Office that was prepared by the Interim Ombudsperson. The Committee welcomed the work done by the Office and continued to be of the view that sufficient time would need to be devoted to the function within the Organization, in accordance with UN system benchmarks.

62. The Committee reviewed, during its 74th session, dashboards provided by the Interim Ombudsperson which summarized the activities of the Ombuds Office. The Committee noted the importance of the function and the increase in demand for the service. The Committee welcomed the three-month extension of the staffing of the Office until the implementation of a different arrangement with the United Nations Ombuds Service (UNOMS) was made. The Committee expressed appreciation for the work done by the Interim Ombudsperson.

63. During its 75th Session, the Committee reviewed a dashboard provided by the Ombudsperson that summarized the activities of the Ombuds Office. The dashboard indicated that the Ombuds Office handled 54 cases during the first 11 months of 2024, of which the majority related to supervisory relationships, prohibited conduct and compliance, and job and career concerns. The Committee noted the importance of the Ombuds function and the increase in demand for consultations. The Committee welcomed the new six-month extension of the staffing of the function until the implementation of a different arrangement with the UNOMS had been made. The Committee was keen to evaluate the effectiveness of the new arrangement, which was delayed and was now scheduled to be in place by mid-year 2025. The interim Ombudsperson formulated advice on: (i) the need to focus on the role of supervisors in mitigating conflicts, including managerial training; (ii) the need to pay attention to team building and morale; and (iii) the need to re-enforce the ethics, values and standards of the Organization. The Committee expressed appreciation for the work done by the interim Ombudsperson.

64. The Committee reviewed, during its 76th session, an update provided by the Ombudsperson, covering the first quarter of 2025. The Ombudsperson reported handling 15 cases involving 16 distinct visitors and 29 total visits from January to March. Supervisory relationships emerged as the top concern, accounting for 11 cases, with specific issues around performance appraisal, team morale, and supervisory effectiveness. The Committee discussed the potential transition arrangements and noted the current Ombudsperson has been extended until June 2025. The Committee supported the Ombudsperson's initiative to prepare and publish an annual report online. The Ombuds Office continued to function effectively in the process of informal conflict resolution in consultation with other organizational entities, when necessary.

G. Update on Human Resources Management

65. The Committee received, during its 74th session, updates from the Director, Human Resources Management Department (HRMD), on mobility, strategic workforce planning, restructuring HR operations, geographical diversity action plan and occupational safety and

health, as well as the results of the staff engagement survey. The Director provided further updates on recruitment activities related to the Chief Ethics Officer, Ombuds Services, Senior Medical Officer and IOD staffing. The Committee noted the initiatives that are ongoing in the human resources field.

66. During its 75th Session, the Committee reviewed an update provided by the Director, HRMD, on the status of recruitments within IOD and the arrangement for the Ombuds services and the Staff Counsellor. The update also included details on key initiatives within HRMD, including workforce planning, occupational health and safety services, staff mobility, ERP implementation, and HRMD 2025 main priorities. The Committee discussed with the Director of HRMD the need for appropriate key performance indicators, once the new ERP system was in place.

H. Other Matters

WIPO Investment Reports

67. As requested by Member States, the Secretariat submitted to the Committee, at each of its sessions, the available monthly Investment Performance Reports and the monthly Investment Monitoring Reports, prepared by the Investment Advisors and the Custodian, respectively. The Committee wishes to clarify that its role is limited to conveying to Member States the information contained in the monthly Investment Performance Reports and Investment Monitoring Reports and does not provide any assurances in that regard.

68. Regarding the periodic reviews of the monthly investment reports from March 2024 through February 2025, the Committee confirmed that the information provided during the reporting period showed that, based on the investment market benchmark, all the investment funds in WIPO's investment portfolios were managed in accordance with the stated Investment Strategy. In addition, the Committee confirmed that the Custodian did not report any breaches, active or passive, nor justified exceptions.

IV. CLOSING REMARKS

69. The Committee would like to express its appreciation to the Director General, the Secretariat staff, and the External Auditor, for their availability, clarity, and openness in their regular interactions with the Committee, and for the information provided.

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