Five-Year Strategy for the Lebanese Central Inspection

Foreword by the President of the Central Inspection

When I first assumed my duties at the Central Inspection (CI) in 2017, I realized the weight of the responsibility entrusted to this oversight body, as well as the gap that existed between the CI, on the one hand, and public servants and citizens, on the other.

Founded in 1959 under the mandate of President Fouad Chehab, the Central Inspection has experienced years of success and achievements, as well as periods during which it was less effective, due to several reasons, the most prominent of which was the Lebanese Civil War, which had adverse effects on this body, as well as all other government institutions. Moreover, the lack of much-needed support from subsequent governments has further weakened the crucial role of the CI in the area of reform.

The role of the Central Inspection is not limited to overseeing the legality of the actions undertaken by public administrations, but also includes advising administrations.

CENTRAL INSPECTION
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> I would like to thank all those who have contributed to the development of this strategy. It is now upon us to achieve the set objectives, despite all the challenges and hardships and the limited human and material resources at our disposal. We will not surrender to despair. We shall remain steadfast in our endeavor until this body regains its leading position in the public sector and once again buttress the development of public administrations.

In order to shoulder its assigned responsibilities during one of the worst political, social, and economic crises that Lebanon and its public administrations have ever seen, and in response to the popular calls for fighting the rampant corruption in public institutions, the Central Inspection had to think strategically, by outlining a clear vision and setting clear objectives and priorities. The purpose of these was to enable the CI to fulfil its oversight and guidance duties more effectively, to advance public administrations, and to implement the desired reforms, with the aim of serving citizens and bolstering their trust in the State.

Therefore, this strategy was not a product of chance, but rather the response to the pressing need for change and development. It is the result of the joint work of many of inspectors and inspectors-general, in collaboration with experts from Expertise France, under the EU-funded ACT project. The strategy rests on two pillars:

1- Empowering and modernizing the Central Inspection;

2- Promoting CI relationships with the judiciary, oversight authorities, and the community.

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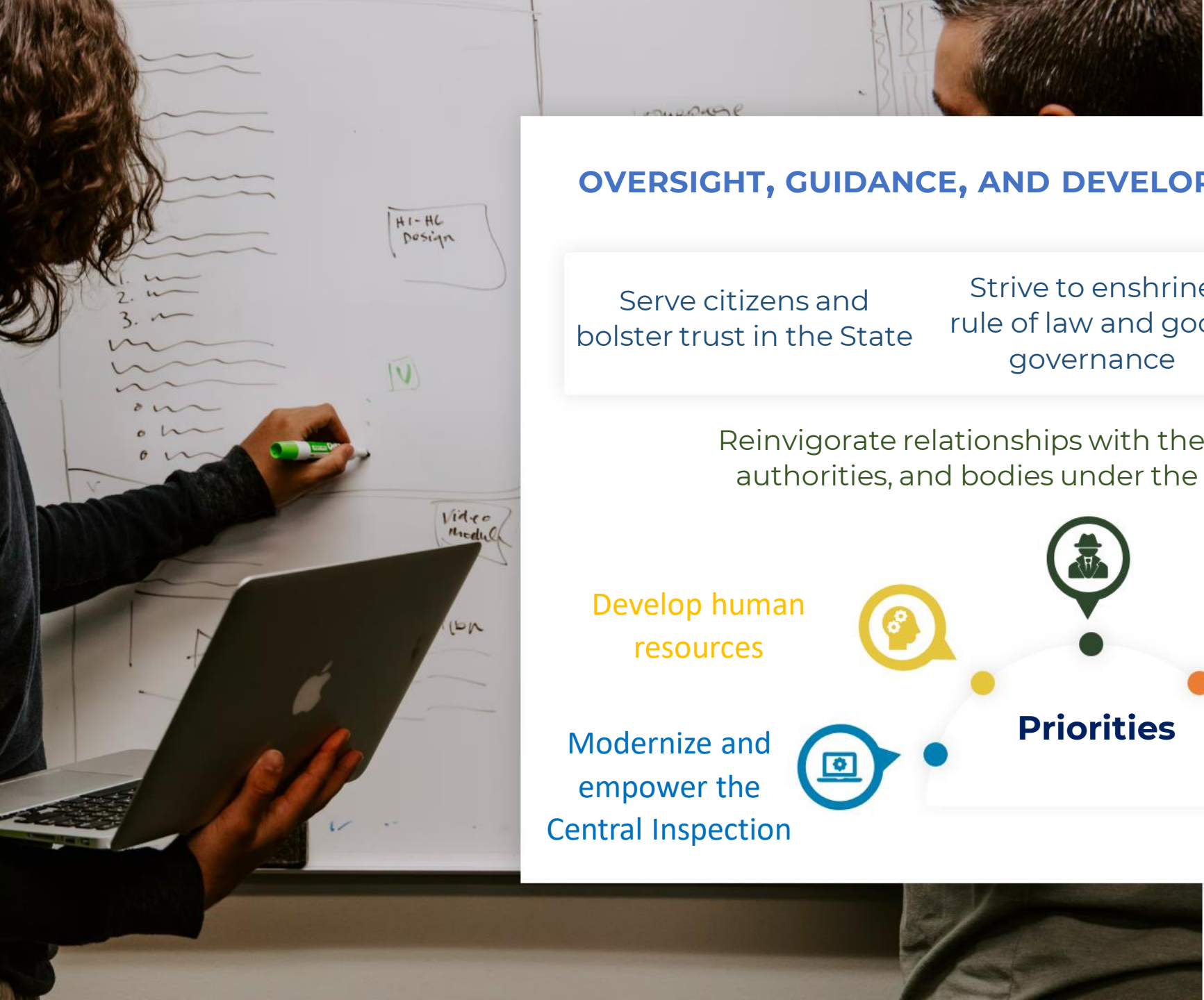
Priorities

Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4	Priority 5
Modernize and empower the Central Inspection	Develop human resources	Reinvigorate relationships with the judiciary, oversight authorities, and bodies under the mandate of the Central Inspection	Build partnerships with the community	Improve relationships with public authorities



OVERSIGHT, GUIDANCE, AND DEVELOPMENT

Serve citizens and bolster trust in the State

Strive to enshrine rule of law and good governance

Contribute to the advancement of public administrations

Reinvigorate relationships with the judiciary, oversight authorities, and bodies under the mandate of the CI

Develop human resources

Build partnerships with the community

Priorities

Modernize and empower the Central Inspection

Improve relationships with public authorities

Priority 1

MODERNIZE AND EMPOWER THE CENTRAL INSPECTION

Given its limited resources, the Central Inspection is unable to cover the entire scope of its responsibilities. As such, it is forced to resort to other measures to achieve its objectives, such as a risk analysis-based programming approach or standardizing and developing the necessary tools and systems.

1. Objective 1

Adopt International Public Sector Oversight and Inspection Standards

International standards relate to conduct, specialization, and performance. They provide for the proper conduct of inspectors/auditors and the quality of their work.

These standards are similar to those adopted by the Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) and applied by private companies and similar oversight bodies in many countries around the world.

They ensure transparency, save valuable time, and inspire trust among donors.

2. Objective 2

Compile a Database

Currently, there is no oversight body having all the means necessary to practice comprehensive oversight of the entities under its mandate. As comprehensive oversight is not possible, efforts must be focused on the fields and areas that are most vulnerable to corruption.

Reliable sources of information used to analyze and monitor risks are both internal, acquired through previous work, and external, acquired from the Court of Audit, other oversight bodies, the judiciary, and violations detected by administrations and the media. Since this information is not official, it is essential to develop a primary risk map, based on a unified format, containing a description of risks, their nature, the severity of their impact, and their frequency.

This will allow for more effective oversight based on enquiry or a previous examination of risks related to mismanagement, fraud, or corruption.

3. Objective 3

Develop Inspection Procedures

The Central Inspection's mechanisms of action will be detailed in written standard operating procedures. They will be integrated in templates to ensure practical implementation of standards, quality assurance, and the standardization of procedures across all inspectorates-general.

4. Objective 4

Automate Central Inspection Activities

In order to enhance CI effectiveness, it is necessary to upgrade its procedures, considering the volume of data to be processed. Through new applications, the different bodies under the mandate of the CI would be linked, thereby allowing them to input the required information.

5. Objective 5

Develop Digital Connections with Administrations under the Mandate of the Central Inspection

The goal is to establish digital connections with administrations that would allow the collection of existing and necessary data when needed. This would significantly reduce the use of paper. Ideally, relevant data would be available electronically to all concerned parties, to instantly check files and retrieve what is required for the audit. This can be done by creating a direct link between CI applications and systems and those of administrations.

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5. Objective 5

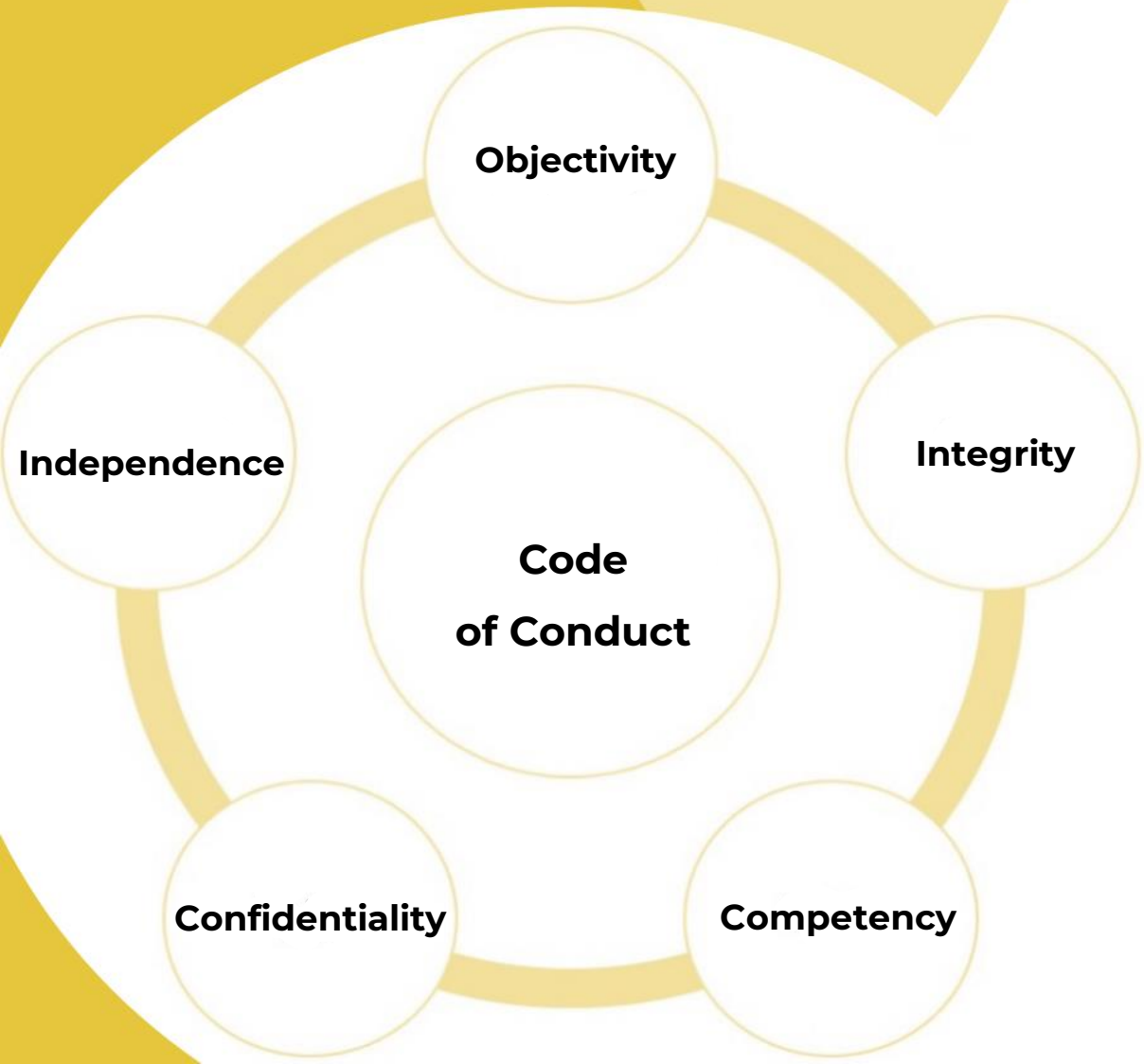
Set Indicators to Monitor the Performance of Public Administrations and the Implementation of their Strategic Plans

The Central Inspection has adopted indicators to evaluate the performance of public administrations, in terms of their compliance with applicable laws and regulations, on the one hand, and their progress in implementing their strategic objectives, on the other. This process compares what the administration has already achieved and what is still expected of them. In addition, the Central Inspection monitors the implementation of plans and the obstacles hindering the achievement of certain objectives. It also offers guidance and recommendations to address these challenges. Performance indicators hold public administrations accountable.

Priority 2

DEVELOP HUMAN RESOURCES

Apart from the acute shortage of human resources, newly appointed inspectors do not always fulfil the actual requirements of the Central Inspection, in terms of their specialization and relevant experience. It is therefore necessary for the Central Inspection to objectively advertise its needs and to provide its inspectors with the knowledge needed to perform their duties.



1. Objective 1

Develop and Disseminate a Professional Code of Conduct

Similar to other civil servants, Central Inspection staff are bound by regulations that ensure impartiality and preserve the confidentiality of information obtained in the exercise of their duties. Given the nature of the Central Inspection's work, a professional Code of Conduct and relevant international standards will be adopted to clearly define the conduct and procedures to be observed by CI staff. This Code of Conduct will be aligned with the ethical values and principles stipulated in the Civil Servants Regulations

2. Objective 2

Prepare an Annual Program for Pr... Needs-Based Technical And Syste... Training

Inspectors must undergo training courses to develop their skills. As the Central Inspection will adopt new and modernized auditing tools and procedures, the staff should be adequately trained on the use of these tools and procedures.

Although inspectors hold degrees and have theoretical knowledge, they still lack auditing skills. Therefore, they must be provided with specialized training courses, through cooperation with public sector actors or by contracting private training agencies.

3. **Objective** 3

Develop a Preparatory Training Program for Newly-Appointed Inspectors

Newly-appointed inspectors are often unfamiliar with modern auditing procedures. Therefore, it is necessary to offer them a preparatory training that would equip them with the basic knowledge, skills, and behaviors required to undertake their oversight functions effectively.

4. Objective 4

Establish a Training Unit within the Central Inspection

It is preferable for the Central Inspection to use its own qualified personnel to train staff. Only a few public sector administrations are knowledgeable in the auditing concepts or approaches adopted by the Central Inspection. Therefore, it is essential to have a permanent internal training unit consisting of staff members who are well-versed in the new procedures.

5. **Objective** 5

Organize Regular Meetings for all Inspectorates-General

Coordination becomes all the more important when several inspectorates-general are working on the same task, as it prevents any overlap or conflict. Moreover, all inspection tasks help to expand inspectors' expertise and knowledge, hence the need to share the lessons learned with all concerned parties within Central Inspection.

It is necessary to hold meetings for the different inspectorates-general to exchange ideas, particularly when new risks arise or when new tools can be adopted.

6. Objective 6

Constant and Continuous Evaluation of Human Resources

The Central Inspection lacks the necessary and sufficient human resources to undertake the full scope of its duties. For this reason, recruitment must be carried out as needed, the annual training program must be set and updated as necessary, and public authorities must be informed of the CI’s needs in terms of human and financial resources.

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Priority 3

REINVIGORATE RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE JUDICIARY, OVERSIGHT AUTHORITIES, AND BODIES UNDER THE MANDATE OF THE CENTRAL INSPECTION

Relationships between the Central Inspection and the judiciary, as well as other oversight bodies, must be reinvigorated in order to receive information and ensure coordination to avoid overlapping efforts. Furthermore, it is necessary to improve ties with bodies under the mandate of the Central Inspection, by taking their suggestions into consideration with respect to how audits are carried out in certain areas and involving them in monitoring the implementation of recommendations.

1. **Objective** 1

Strengthen Coordination with the Judiciary with regard to the Exchange of Information

The functions of the judiciary and the Central Inspection overlap with regard to the public sector, although each operates under their own mandate and according to their own procedures. As a result, the judiciary and the Central Inspection may obtain information that might interest or benefit the other in their line of work. For this reason, a cooperation mechanism must be adopted between the Central Inspection and the judiciary. Information from the judiciary could help the Central Inspection in analyzing the risks upon which it relies to perform its oversight duties.

The Central Inspection will strive to reinvigorate relationships with both the judiciary and the Court of Accounts. Moreover, it will suggest signing a cooperation agreement to prevent the duplication of oversight over concerned bodies. This document could include information on the oversight programs adopted by each of the various oversight bodies, in addition to information sharing plans regarding outcomes and suggestions to avoid discrepancies within the same case.

2. **Objective** 2

Reinvigorate Coordination between Oversight Bodies

Overlapping investigations by different oversight bodies in the same public administration entail a heavy burden on the latter. Coordination and information sharing among oversight bodies are the ideal way to avoid the duplication of investigations. The Central Inspection will seek to adopt joint action plans to share findings with the various bodies when possible.

3. **Objective** 3

Develop the Audit Charter between the Central Inspection and the Bodies under its Mandate

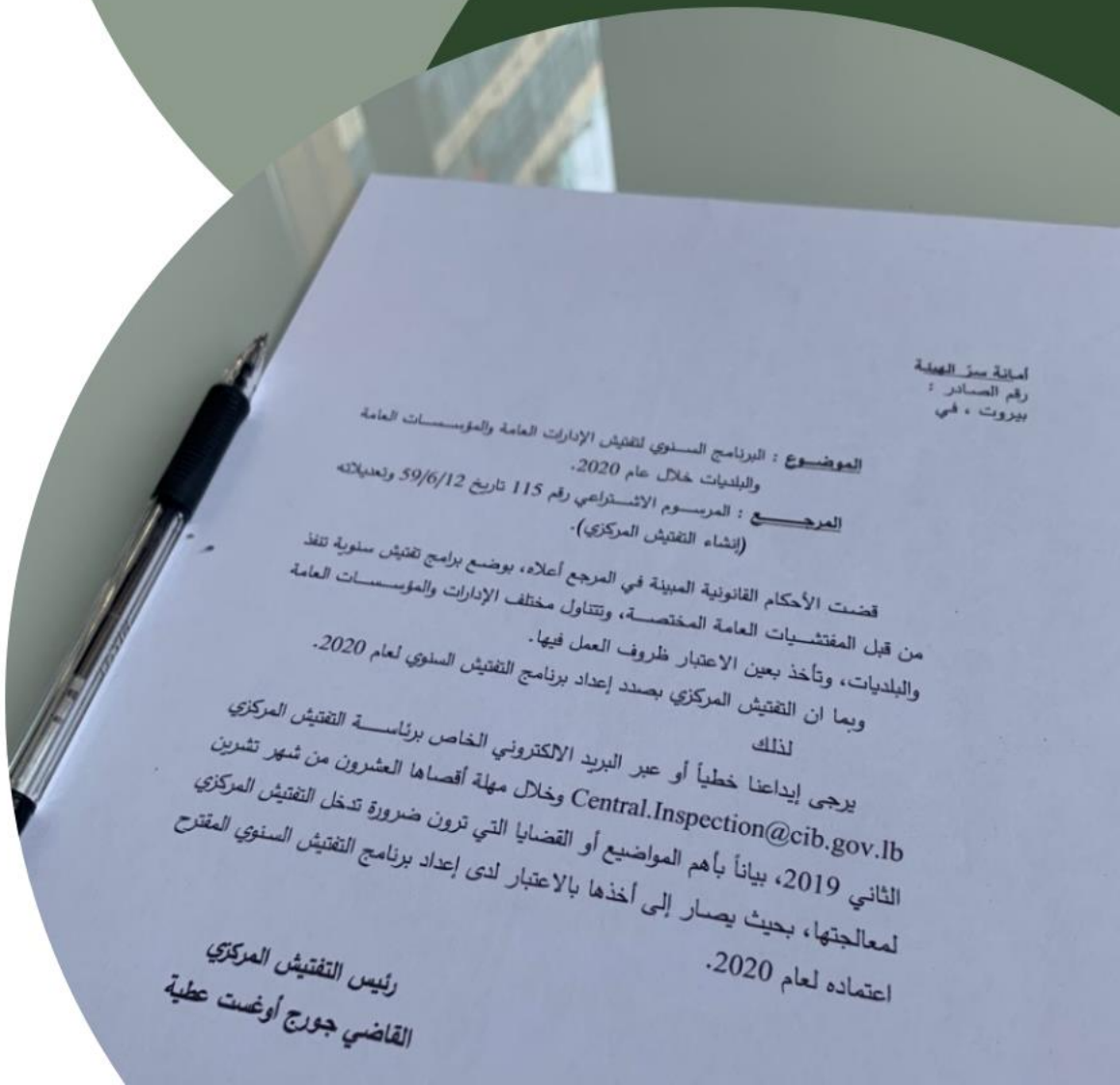
The relationship between inspectors and the bodies subject to inspection is often fraught, due to the common misconception that the inspector's job is merely to detect violations and punish the culprits. However, the responsibilities of the Central Inspection also include assisting public administrations in developing their work. Therefore, inspectors must focus on the processes adopted by the bodies under the CI's mandate, identify weaknesses, offer the necessary suggestions to bridge the gaps at the level of procedures, and rectify current processes.

In order to clarify the relationship between the Central Inspection and the bodies under its mandate, the Central Inspection shall clearly define its role, objectives, and work procedures. Furthermore, it will elaborate on the rights and obligations of the bodies under its mandate, all within a standard audit charter

4. Objective 4

Develop the Audit Charter between the Central Inspection and the Bodies under its Mandate

The Central Inspection will consult with the bodies under its mandate on matters that require auditing more than others, which will help to better identify risks. The Central Inspection will subsequently establish a program to perform its oversight in light of these suggestions.



5. **Objective** 5

Monitor the Implementation of CI Recommendations with Bodies under its Mandate

Based on their findings, inspectors must raise suggestions to the President of the Central Inspection in order to improve the work of public administrations.

Subsequently, inspectors will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of these recommendations. In order to reinforce the effectiveness of the Central Inspection's suggestions, inspectors will participate in discussions with bodies under the CI mandate and set a course of action for each of them, through which they commit to applying corrective measures.

6. **Objective** 6

Foster a Culture of Cooperation with the Central Inspection among Civil Servants

The Central Inspection must be trusted by the community in general, and by civil servants in particular.

Building a sound administration hinges particularly on cooperation between civil servants and CI inspectors. Therefore, regular meetings must be held with public administrations to clarify the nature of the CI's work and objectives.

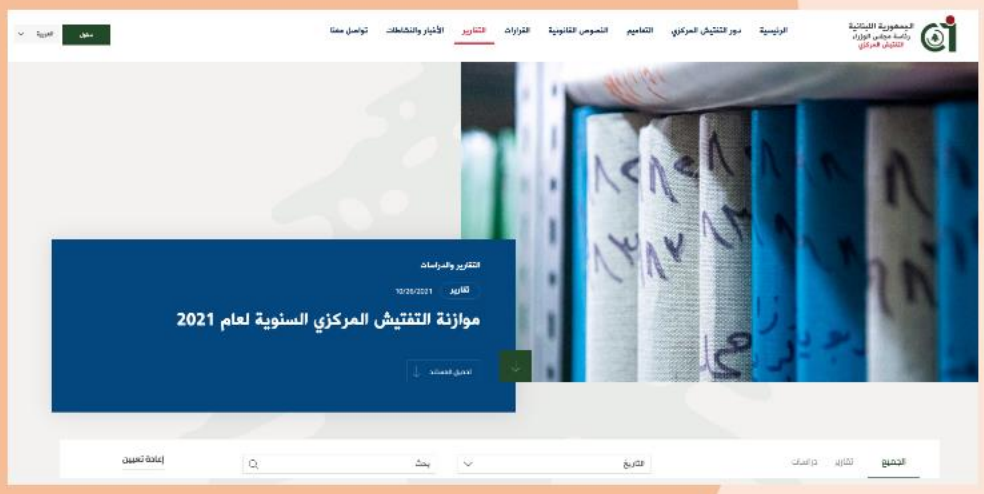
In order to bolster this trust, the Central Inspection will commit to transparency and will consult with public administrations on matters that require auditing, after which it will propose recommendations.

As such, public administrations will be aware of the assistance that the Central Inspection can provide to help achieve their objectives.

Priority 4

BUILD PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE COMMUNITY

The assessment of the Central Inspection has revealed that neither its status, nor its role in the public sector, nor its successes seem to be sufficiently recognized. Considering the importance of the fight against corruption and the recent attention it has received, an effective engagement policy must be adopted by reaching out to and enhancing cooperation with civil society actors.



1. **Objective** 1

Enhance Knowledge about the CI through its Annual Report and Website

An annual report template will be developed to provide the community with a clearer picture of CI activities. This report will be first shared with public authorities, then the media, and later published on the Central Inspection's website. Meanwhile, the CI website will be completed to make it more aligned with users' needs.

2. **Objective** 2

Cooperation and Coordination between the Central Inspection and Civil Society Actors

The Central Inspection must communicate with civil society actors, provide necessary clarifications regarding the nature of its duties, and share its activities. Through this approach, the Central Inspection could rely on these parties to disseminate information about its activities.

The purpose of this cooperation with civil society actors is to educate the new generation on the need to fight corruption and the means to that end.

In addition, it is necessary to build a solid relationship with IIA Lebanon and organize the first ever joint conference. The Central Inspection will include this activity under its strategic engagement plan.

3. **Objective** 3

Develop a Media Engagement Strategy

Since the CI annual report might not receive sufficient attention from the public, the Central Inspection will organize a press conference to present a summary of its actions and their outcomes during the past year. It will also hold press conferences for every meaningful event or activity. It will work on building long-lasting relationships with relevant media outlets.

The Central Inspection will develop a communication strategy, including the information it would like to share; and in order to implement this strategy, yearly communication plans will be set to determine the required practical steps

4. Objective 4

Establish an Outreach Unit to Promote Community Engagement

Community engagement is a sensitive matter that requires specific skills and extensive knowledge. The aim is to form an outreach unit that is directly linked to the President of the Central Inspection. It will be in charge of developing an engagement strategy and plan and working on maintaining relationships with the media and civil society actors.

5. Objective 5

Streamline Citizen Complaint Mechanisms and Enhance Timely Processing

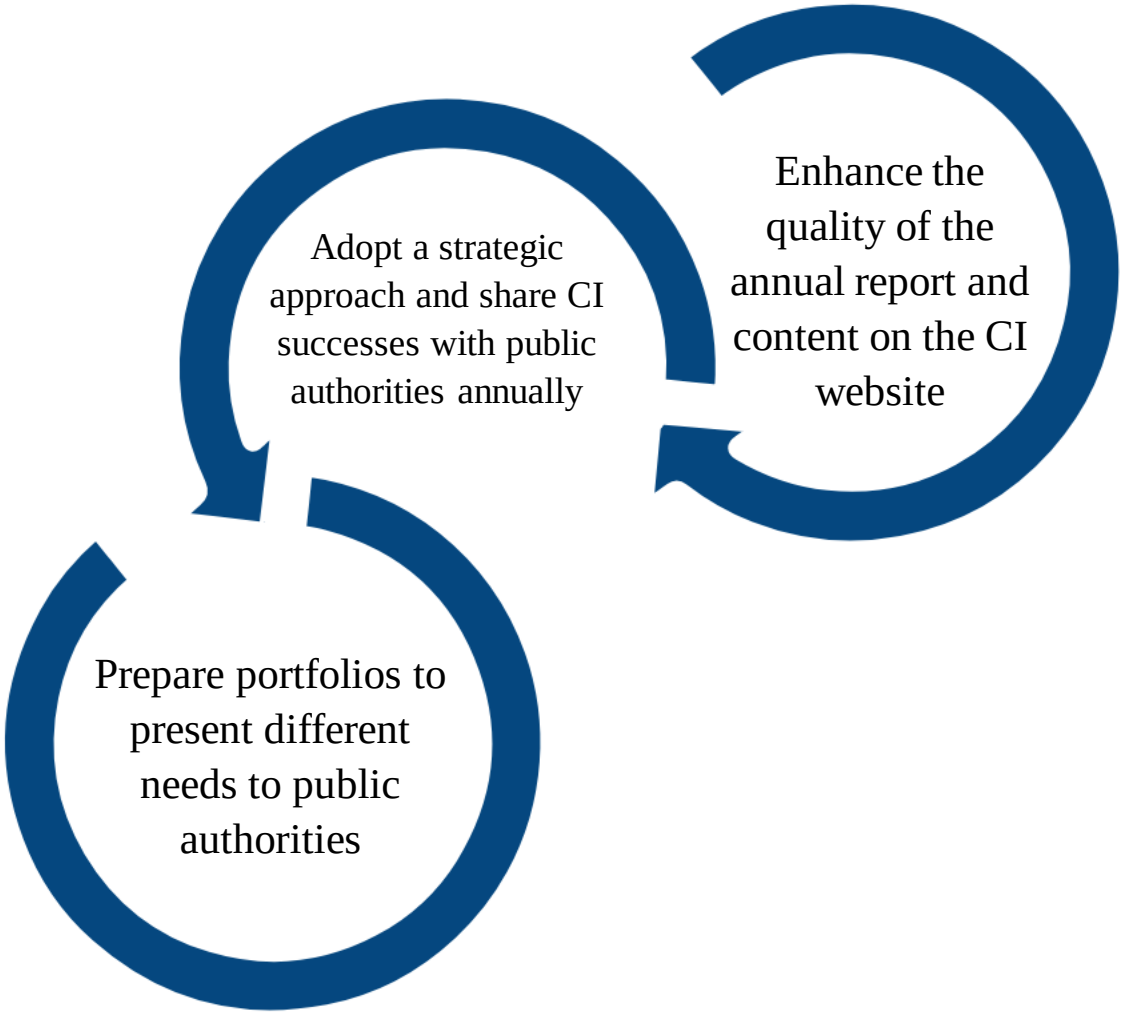
Processing citizen complaints is considered one of the most important tasks of the Central Inspection. However, the receipt and follow-up on complaints is still manual and unautomated. Therefore, a new electronic application will be developed to automate the different stages of the mechanism. Automation will streamline the processing of complaints and filter out non-serious submissions and those lacking evidence. The Central Inspection will also improve its annual reporting on the outcomes of these complaints.

6. **Objective** 6

Conduct Community Satisfaction Surveys regarding Public Administrations and CI Performance

To measure community satisfaction regarding the performance of the CI and the bodies under its mandate, surveys will be conducted covering the work they perform, particularly the processing of citizen complaints. This will be undertaken by specialized bodies with sufficient skills and the necessary technology, as these studies differ from regular polls.

Objectives



Priority 5

PROMOTE RELATIONSHIPS WITH PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

One of the tasks of the Central Inspection is to stimulate public administrations to improve their performance and level of transparency. In order for recommendations to be taken seriously and effectively, these authorities must fully support the Central Inspection. In turn, the CI must launch a self-modernizing process, through its own strategy, which will serve as a contract determining the nature of the relationship with public authorities.

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1. Objective 1

Enhance the Quality of the Annual Report and Content on the CI Website

Enhancing the information shared about CI activities and outcomes is not only a necessity for citizens, but also for public authorities, as it provides them with information on the CI's actions and progress at the level of the public administration as a whole.

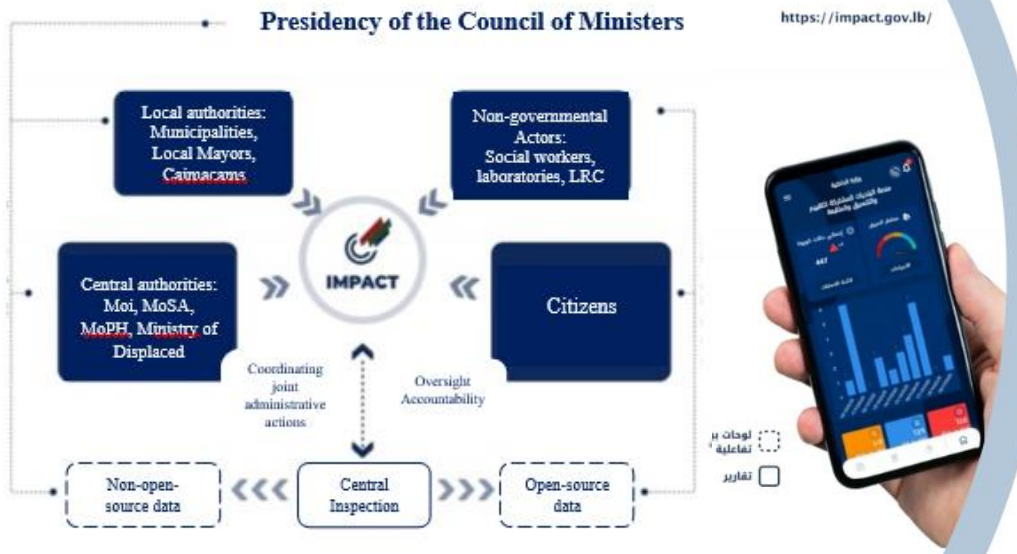
The annual report and the website are key to engage with citizens and public authorities. Studies and special reports on various important topics requiring special attention could also be developed as needed.

2. **Objective** 2

Adopt a Strategic Approach and Share CI Successes with Public Authorities Annually

Lebanon is currently reconsidering the role of its oversight institutions and developing frameworks to bolster their structure, given the current economic crisis and the reform conditions set by external donors in order to grant assistance.

The Central Inspection has decided to follow a strategic path, based on two pillars: ensure modern procedures and professionalize service, and promote the trust of stakeholders through better communication about its activities and their outcomes.



3. **Objective** 3

Prepare Portfolios to Present Different Needs to Public Authorities

The Central Inspection will prepare a comprehensive portfolio that includes its needs in terms of human and material resources, along with the necessary justifications. Draft laws will be prepared and submitted with these portfolios as needed. Once enacted, these laws would lead enable the CI to enhance its performance.

Website: www.cib.gov.lb
Email: info@cib.gov.lb
Social media (Twitter, Instagram): @CInspectionLB

Central Inspection, Beirut, Verdun Street, Baydoun Building.