



General Assembly

Distr.: General
5 June 2003

Original: English

Fifty-eighth session

Items 123 and 124 of the preliminary list*

Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005

Programme planning

Proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005

Programme 23 Public information

Note by the Secretary-General

1. The preparation, format and content of the medium-term plan and its revisions are governed by the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation (ST/SGB/2000/8).
2. Pursuant to regulation 5.1 of the Regulations and Rules, the medium-term plan, as approved and revised by the General Assembly, shall serve as the framework for the formulation of the biennial programme budget.
3. A comprehensive review of the Department of Public Information was conducted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 56/253 of 24 December 2001 and the Secretary-General's reform efforts (see A/57/387 and Corr.1). The General Assembly, in paragraph 11 of its resolution 57/300 of 20 December 2002, welcomed the proposal to improve the effective and targeted delivery of public information activities, including the restructuring of the Department of Public Information. In paragraph 12 of the same resolution, the General Assembly invited the Committee on Information to engage actively in the process.
4. In accordance with the above, the report of the Secretary-General on the reorientation of the United Nations in the field of public information and communications (A/AC.198/2003/2), which detailed the new structure and operating concepts of the Department, was reviewed by the Committee on Information at its twenty-fifth session, in April-May 2003. The Committee, in paragraph 33 of its

* A/58/50/Rev.1 and Corr.1.

report (A/58/21),¹ welcomed the new subprogramme structure, which includes strategic communications services, news services, library services and outreach services.

5. Accordingly, the revision proposed in the annex to the present document replaces programme 23, Public information, of the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 as revised by the General Assembly in its resolution 57/282 of 20 December 2002.² The proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005 (A/58/6 (Sect. 28)) takes into account the new subprogramme structure, which is different from that of programme 23 of the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005.

6. As part of the effort to focus on core competencies, the Cartographic Section is being transferred to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Accordingly, the activities described in paragraph 23.34 of the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 will be carried out by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

7. Because of the magnitude of the revisions, it was not considered practical to show the changes by using boldface type for the new text and striking out the text to be deleted. Accordingly, the narrative is presented as new and does not identify separately the new text and the text to be deleted.

8. In order to comply with the above-mentioned regulation 5.1, it is recommended that the General Assembly approve the revised medium-term plan for programme 23, Public information, as contained in the annex.

Notes

¹ To be issued as *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 21*.

² *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 6 (A/57/6/Rev.1)*, programme 23.

Annex

Proposed revisions to programme 23, Public information, of the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005^a

Overall orientation

[Replaces old overall orientation; old paras. 23.1-23.6 are replaced by the new paragraphs below]

23.1 The overarching mandate of the Department, which dates back to General Assembly resolution 13 (I) of 13 February 1946, is to increase awareness and understanding of the work and purposes of the United Nations among the peoples of the world. However, the comprehensive review of the Department undertaken in 2002 and described below, found that the Department as a whole suffered from a fragmentation of its efforts as a result of its having too many mandates and missions. To help clarify the goals and purposes of the Department, and to enhance its overall effectiveness and efficiency, a new mission statement has been formulated, as follows:

“The Department of Public Information’s mission is to help fulfil the substantive purposes of the United Nations by strategically communicating the activities and concerns of the Organization to achieve the greatest public impact.”

23.2 Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 56/253 of 24 December 2001, a comprehensive review of the Department of Public Information was undertaken in 2002. The initial results of the review were submitted to the Committee on Information (see A/AC.198/2002/2). Subsequently, a final report on the review was submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session as part of the Secretary-General’s report entitled “Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change” (A/57/387 and Corr.1). Guided by the reform efforts of the Secretary-General, the comprehensive review served to align the Department’s core competencies with the long list of mandates it carries out. In adhering to its renewed mission, the Department will be guided by the priorities laid down by the General Assembly. Its core message, with the United Nations Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2) as its main guide, will focus on the eradication of poverty, conflict prevention, sustainable development, human rights, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the battle against international terrorism and the needs of the African continent (see resolution 57/130 B).

23.3 The Department of Public Information is responsible for implementing the programme of activities under this section. These activities are carried out at Headquarters in New York and through the worldwide network of United Nations information centres and services. The programme is guided by the General Assembly and its subsidiary organ, the Committee on Information.

^a *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 6 (A/57/6/Rev.1).*

23.4 A new operating model, which aims to improve the Department's ability to deliver effective and targeted information programmes, has been created for the Department to realize its mission. It is based on a clear conception of the Department's role and an elaboration of its functions in a manner that emphasizes current communication challenges, while also providing the expected services to Member States. The model further recognizes that content generation emanates from the other departments and offices of the Secretariat, as well as from the bodies and organizations of the United Nations system, while content coordination and refinement, as well as content presentation and distribution, are the responsibility of the Department, working in close cooperation with the media, Member States and civil society partners.

23.5 As a result of the new operating model, a new structure for the Department, comprising the Strategic Communications Division, the News and Media Division and the Outreach Division was put into effect in November 2002.

23.6 The transformation of the Department of Public Information, as envisaged in the report of the Secretary-General (A/57/387 and Corr.1), will ensure that the United Nations has an effective communication mechanism in place to tell its story and thus gain the public support that is essential for strengthening the Organization. The General Assembly, in its resolution 57/300 of 20 December 2002, reaffirmed the role of the Committee on Information in guiding the process of restructuring the Department, and invited the Committee to engage actively in this process.

23.7 The United Nations information centres, the United Nations information services and the information components of the United Nations field offices serve as branch offices of the Department. As such, they are integral to the implementation of the Department's strategies and the work of its divisions in reaching key constituencies at the local level. The Department is developing an action plan to implement the proposal of the Secretary-General, of which the General Assembly took note in paragraph 15 of its resolution 57/300, to rationalize the network of United Nations information centres around regional hubs, starting with the creation of a regional hub in Western Europe. This proposal does not include the United Nations information services in Geneva and Vienna since they perform functions essential to the work of the United Nations offices in those cities. In paragraph 40 of draft resolution B recommended by the Committee on Information at its twenty-fifth session for adoption by the General Assembly (see A/58/21), the General Assembly would reaffirm paragraph 15 of its resolution 57/300. This new operating concept will also be aimed at achieving a better distribution of resources to information centres in developing countries and the redeployment of resources to other high-priority activities, such as advancing multilingualism on the United Nations web site and the systematic evaluation of the impact of major product and service lines, in accordance with results-based management — activities that have been strongly supported by Member States but for which resources are not available.

23.8 The Department will enhance its capacity to respond to unpredictable and fast-moving events around the world by providing information services to the media, Member States, non-governmental organizations and the public on United Nations actions in connection with these critical situations, including through the provision of guided tours and briefing programmes in New York, Geneva and Vienna, providing services for a total of approximately 1.4 million visitors per biennium. Its expertise will be strengthened through cooperation with relevant substantive

Secretariat departments and offices and organizations of the United Nations system. It will continue to disseminate the United Nations message through traditional means of communication as well as using new technologies, and will take the lead in modernizing library services throughout the Organization.

Subprogramme 1

Strategic communications services

[Replaces old subprogramme 1, Promotional services; old paras. 23.7-23.13 are replaced by the new paragraphs below]

Objective

23.9 The objective of the subprogramme is to broaden understanding of and support for the work of the United Nations on priority issues.

Strategy

23.10 Within the Department of Public Information, the responsibility for implementing the subprogramme lies primarily with the Strategic Communications Division, which has been enhanced by the inclusion of the network of United Nations information centres and services, as well as the Africa Section. The subprogramme has been established to devise and disseminate United Nations messages centred on main themes, particularly the priorities outlined by the General Assembly and established by the Secretary-General. The Division develops communication strategies, in close collaboration with the substantive departments, the United Nations funds and programmes and the organizations of the United Nations system, to promote the work of the United Nations on priority issues, using the Millennium Declaration as its guide.

23.11 These messages will be strategically conveyed to the public around the world through proactive relations with the media and other key intermediaries. Under the guidance of the Information Centres Service at Headquarters, the United Nations information centres and services and the information components of United Nations offices will work through local intermediaries to adapt this substantive content to their audiences, giving a local voice to global United Nations messages. The information components of peace missions will also carry these messages.

23.12 In its resolution 57/7 of 4 November 2002, the General Assembly called upon the United Nations to strengthen its advocacy role and public information activities in support of Africa's development. The Africa Section will promote awareness among opinion leaders in Africa and in the international community of the nature of the critical economic and social situation in Africa and of the domestic and international efforts required for recovery and development. It will produce a range of information materials and activities, including *Africa Recovery*, and will ensure their dissemination to a diverse public as well as to target groups, such as parliamentarians, policy makers and civil society.

Expected accomplishments

23.13 Expected accomplishments of the subprogramme would include successful collaboration with client departments to develop communication strategies on

priority issues; increased awareness of key thematic issues among target audiences through the implementation of communication strategies on those issues; and increased utility of materials on priority issues that meet the needs of targeted media.

23.14 As mentioned in paragraph 23.7 above, the subprogramme will develop an action plan to implement the proposal of the Secretary-General to rationalize the network of United Nations information centres around regional hubs, starting with the creation of a regional hub in Western Europe.

Indicators of achievement

23.15 Indicators of achievement would include the percentage of clients that indicate satisfactory collaboration; the percentage of target audiences indicating increased awareness; and the percentage of media outlets that indicate satisfaction with materials produced in support of communication strategies.

Subprogramme 2 News services

[Replaces old subprogramme 2, Information services; old paras. 23.14-23.23 are replaced by the new paragraphs below]

Objective

23.16 The objective of the subprogramme is to increase the interest of news organizations in, as well as their access to, up-to-date news and other information about the Organization.

Strategy

23.17 Within the Department of Public Information, the responsibility for implementing the subprogramme lies primarily with the News and Media Division (which includes the Internet Service, the Press Service and the Radio and Television Service) and the Office of the Spokesman for the Secretary-General. This objective of the subprogramme will be accomplished through the real-time delivery, to media organizations at United Nations Headquarters and in all regions, of authoritative, accurate, balanced and, whenever possible, customized news and information materials about the goals and activities of the United Nations system. Developing country media will be a particular focus of this subprogramme, which will utilize both traditional media and new information technologies, including the Internet, in complementary and reinforcing ways.

23.18 The subprogramme will also continue to focus on maximizing the synergies made possible by the development of information technologies to realize the strategy outlined above, utilizing the daily output of the United Nations News Service, the United Nations web site, United Nations Radio and United Nations Television, including video, photos and press releases. Underpinning the subprogramme will be a major project, begun in the 2000-2001 biennium, to modernize the Department's production and broadcast infrastructure, including further digitization. The creation of the Internet Service will contribute substantially to the strengthened and coordinated utilization of the Internet as a multimedia

channel for both the production of such news materials and their dissemination to all regions quickly and in all official languages.

23.19 The subprogramme will proactively reach out directly to journalists and media organizations and seek partnerships with broadcasters to ensure that the news media in all regions have access at all times to news about United Nations activities and to the perspectives of the Organization as it addresses the priority concerns identified by the Member States.

23.20 The multilingual capacity of the United Nations web site will also be strengthened.

Expected accomplishments

23.21 Expected accomplishments of the subprogramme would include satisfaction with the availability of timely, accurate, objective and balanced information and/or services to the media, delegations, other audiences and redisseminators on the role of the United Nations in addressing the priority issues before the Organization.

Indicators of achievement

23.22 Indicators of achievement would include the percentage of users indicating satisfaction with the availability of timely, accurate, objective and balanced information and/or services.

Subprogramme 3 Library services

[Title and objective of Subprogramme 3 remains unchanged; however, old paras. 23.25-23.30 are replaced by the new paragraphs below]

Objective

23.23 The objective of the subprogramme is to facilitate access to timely and up-to-date library products and services for use by delegates, permanent missions of Member States, the Secretariat, researchers and depository libraries worldwide.

Strategy

23.24 Within the Department of Public Information, the responsibility for implementing the subprogramme lies with the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, in coordination with other United Nations libraries and libraries of the wider United Nations system. The subprogramme aims to create and/or provide timely and up-to-date information products and services to meet the needs of delegates, secretariat staff and researchers; to facilitate access to United Nations information for depository libraries and the general public worldwide; to contribute to bridging the digital divide; to mobilize the international library community, in particular depository libraries, as conduits of outreach to civil society; and to oversee and coordinate the activities of United Nations libraries.

23.25 The Dag Hammarskjöld Library, in coordination with other United Nations libraries and libraries of the wider United Nations system, will continue to move in the direction of becoming a virtual library, while not neglecting the print collections

of United Nations documents, books, serials and government documents required by its users. There will be increasing emphasis on the creation and delivery of electronic information, outreach to depository libraries and support for multilingualism. The delivery of customized information directly to the desktops of permanent missions at Headquarters and Secretariat staff worldwide will be expanded. The Library's Internet and Intranet sites will be enriched and further developed in all six official languages, with multilingual retrieval capabilities. Access to commercially available electronic information will be made available in a cost-effective way through the United Nations System Consortium. The access of depository libraries to United Nations databases will be promoted, where feasible, to ensure rapid, complete and cost-effective document distribution. Through active participation in inter-agency library forums, the Library will promote the sharing of information throughout the United Nations system.

23.26 In-house creation and processing of data, including databases and other electronic products, published indexes, standards and guidelines for bibliographic control and multilingual reference tools will be expanded and improved. The United Nations Bibliographic Information System (UNBIS) Thesaurus will be regularly maintained as a six-language database. Two comprehensive, accurate and high-quality annual editions of the *Yearbook of the United Nations* will be published, covering the years 2002 and 2003, and will constitute input for parallel CD-ROM versions of the *Yearbook*.

23.27 A major focus will be on training, including courses for Headquarters users and depository librarians overseas, as well as electronic delivery of advice, manuals and database structures to small United Nations libraries in the field.

Expected accomplishments

23.28 Expected accomplishments of the subprogramme would include easier, more extensive and timelier access by users to products and services of the Library; and timely issuance of the *Yearbook of the United Nations*.

Indicators of achievement

23.29 Indicators of achievement would include user satisfaction with quality, timeliness and ease of access to the products and services of the Library; and reduced time lag between the end of the year covered and the publication date of the relevant volume of the *Yearbook of the United Nations*.

Subprogramme 4 Outreach services

[Replaces old subprogramme 4, *Publication services*; old paras. 23.31-23.36 are replaced by the new paragraphs below]

Objective

23.30 The objective of the subprogramme is to inform and stimulate opinion and debate through outreach efforts targeted directly to the public and in alliance with key partners, including non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, other

representatives of civil society, the media and the general public, using the Millennium Declaration as a guide.

Strategy

23.31 Responsibility for the subprogramme lies with the Outreach Division, which includes the Civil Society Service, the Sales and Marketing Section and the secretariat of the Publications Board.

23.32 In this connection, the Outreach Division will develop, strengthen and expand its relationships with partners both within the United Nations system and among non-governmental organizations, the academic community and the private sector. The Outreach Division will also seek opportunities to promote more effectively its programmes and services designed for those audiences, as well as for the general public, capitalizing on the opportunities provided by new information and communication technologies, including the Internet and videoconferencing.

Expected accomplishments

23.33 Expected accomplishments of the subprogramme would include enhanced understanding of the role, work and concerns of the United Nations resulting from outreach activities, programmes and services.

Indicators of achievement

23.34 Indicators of achievement would include the percentage of target audiences indicating satisfaction that their understanding of the United Nations has grown or improved.

Legislative mandates**Programme 23
Public information***General Assembly resolutions*

1086 (XI)	Public information activities of the United Nations
2897 (XXVI)	Review and appraisal of the United Nations information policies and activities
3047 (XXVII)	Revenue-producing activities
33/115 A-C	Questions relating to information
34/182	Questions relating to information
57/130 A-B	Questions relating to information
57/6	International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010
57/7	Final review and appraisal of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development
57/43	Cooperation between the United Nations and the International Organization of la Francophonie
57/90	United Nations Disarmament Information Programme
57/101	International cooperation and coordination for the human and ecological rehabilitation and economic development of the Semipalatinsk region of Kazakhstan
57/106	Follow-up to the International Year of Volunteers
57/108	Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat
57/109	Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat
57/124	Work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories
57/129	International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers
57/139	Dissemination of information on decolonization
57/144	Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit
57/158	United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage, 2002
57/162	International Year of Rice, 2004
57/164	Preparations for and observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family

-
- 57/195 The fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and the comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action
- 57/212 United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, 1995-2004
- 57/238 World Summit on the Information Society
- 57/242 Preparations for the International Ministerial Conference on Transit Transport Cooperation
- 57/245 International Year of Mountains, 2002
- 57/249 Culture and development
- 57/252 Activities undertaken in preparation for the International Year of Freshwater, 2003
- 57/254 United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development
- 57/266 Implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006)
- 57/277 Public administration and development
- 57/283 B Pattern of conferences (sect. III, Documentation- and publication-related matters)
- 57/294 2001-2010: Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries, Particularly in Africa
- 57/300 Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change

General Assembly decision

- 57/579 Strengthening the Department of Public Information, within the existing capacity, in order to support and enhance the United Nations web site in all official languages of the Organization
-