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REVIEW OF THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL FUNCTIONING OF THE UNITED NATIONS

JOINT INSPECTION UNIT

Managing works of art in the United Nations

Note by the Secretary-General

1. By its resolution 48/217 of 23 December 1993, entitled "Managing works of art in the United Nations: report of the Joint Inspection Unit", the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to improve the management of works of art in such a manner as to avoid additional costs to the regular budget of the United Nations with due regard to the quality of services being provided.
2. The General Assembly also recommended the strengthening of the Arts Committee of the United Nations by obtaining the advice of local experts in honorary capacities. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it on the subject at its fiftieth session.
3. In that connection, the Secretary-General wishes to recall that in its report to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session (A/48/72, annex), the Joint Inspection Unit noted that the works of art in the United Nations shared a need for special care, conservation and protection. In view of that observation and other findings of the Inspectors and taking into account the directives of the General Assembly on the matter, the Secretary-General undertook a review of the in-house capabilities of the Secretariat to improve the management of works of art.
4. The Secretary-General has accordingly determined that responsibility for the management and care of works of art should remain within the Office of

Conference and Support Services and, in particular, should be shared by the Archives Unit and the Buildings Management Services within the Commercial and Building Services Division. Specifically, the functions of a staff member in the Archives Unit have been amended to reflect these responsibilities and, as an initial step towards instituting a comprehensive programme for managing the works of art, a complete inventory is being compiled of all gifts presented to the Organization.

5. Responsibility for maintaining records on United Nations works of art has not previously been centralized. As a result, a number of units and departments involved with the works of art have created inventories adapted to suit the specific needs and functions of their respective departments. This somewhat selective method of listing the gifts has led to the creation of inventories containing incomplete information as well as to duplication of information. In order to redress the situation, the Archives Unit has assembled and consolidated all available inventories.

6. Included in this consolidation are other types of information required for the computer inventory such as artist, medium, dimensions, historical background and so on. By closely comparing the lists, and reviewing with other departments any existing discrepancies, it has been possible to separate anecdotal information from factual and to ensure an essential degree of uniformity in the master inventory.

7. The inventory itself is maintained on a computer database that is currently in use by major art museums for registering and managing their collections. An important element of this comprehensive inventory is an assessment of the condition of the individual works of art. This is an essential element of a comprehensive inventory and will assist in identifying if any particular conservation measures are required to protect individual works of art or if any ongoing maintenance is required. In an effort further to ensure that the most up-to-date methods are employed in managing the works of art, and in line with the recommendations of the General Assembly on strengthening the Arts Committee, contact is maintained, on an as-needed basis, with major art and educational institutions able to provide expert advice.

8. In his comments on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/48/72/Add.1, annex) the Secretary-General observed that the Philatelic Museum at Geneva was an area where the concepts and precepts of a museum collection played a role. In view of this, a review was also undertaken of the oversight mechanisms under which the Museum operated. To ensure that archival standards are maintained for these materials it was decided that the Museum should be jointly administered by the Archives Unit and the United Nations Postal Administration (UNPA). By this means the Secretary-General has endeavoured to ensure the protection of this important and valuable philatelic collection.

9. The Secretary-General will continue to review measures to improve the management of works of art in the United Nations and intends to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session on any action taken in this regard. As an interim observation, however, the Secretary-General wishes to recall that Member States are responsible for the installation, maintenance and, if so

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desired, insurance of their gifts. The Secretary-General wishes to express his sincere appreciation to those Member States which have voluntarily undertaken the renovation, cleaning and other necessary maintenance of their gifts, in particular in connection with the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Organization.
