

Second report

Workload standards for various categories of conference-servicing staff, including clerical and typing staff, and workload statistics for the various conference services in the 1986-1987 and 1988-1989 bienniums

[Original: English]

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1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on workload standards for various categories of conference-servicing staff, including clerical and typing staff, and workload statistics for the various conference services in the 1986-1987 and 1988-1989 bienniums (A/C.5/45/1). The report was prepared in response to recommendations of the Advisory Committee in its first report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1988-1989 1/ and its first report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1990-1991 2/ as endorsed by the General Assembly in section XVI of its resolution 44/201 B of 21 December 1989.
2. Section I of the Secretary-General's report provides workload standards for seven categories of conference-servicing staff, including clerical and typing staff, as follows: in the area of documentation, standards are provided for (a) typing (paras. 7-11), (b) translation (paras. 12-19) and (c) reproduction (paras. 20-24); and in the area of meeting services, standards are provided for (a) interpretation (paras. 25-27), (b) précis-writing (paras. 28-30), (c) verbatim reporting (paras. 31-33) and (d) supporting staff (paras. 34 and 35). In section II of the report, the Secretary-General provides workload statistics for the various conference services in the bienniums 1986-1987 and 1988-1989 (paras. 36-43) and also indicates the impact of workload statistics on the level of conference resources (paras. 44-52).
3. The Advisory Committee notes the Secretary-General's statement (para. 8) that the establishment of word processing has significantly increased the productivity of typists. The Advisory Committee also notes that the present workload standards were established before the introduction of word processing in that area. As indicated in paragraph 10 of the report, the Secretary-General has proposed a net increase of 25 per cent in the existing standards. The Advisory Committee takes note of the problems outlined by the Secretary-General in paragraph 9 of his report that may affect increased productivity. In the view of the Committee, those are not insurmountable and the Committee believes that, as the Secretariat gains more experience in the use of advanced technology, the workload standards proposed by the Secretary-General could be revised further. Upon inquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the new standards did not result from a detailed scientific examination of requirements but are more a rule of thumb. Consequently, the Advisory Committee recommends that, for the present time, workload standards should be increased by 30 per cent, from 3,300 to

4,290 words per day of original language text and from 1,650 to 2,145 words per day of final translated text.

4. The Advisory Committee was informed that, as a result of the introduction of word-processors and a common word-processing software package on a Secretariat-wide basis, author departments were currently in a position to submit documents to the Department of Conference Services in electronic form, which would result eventually in greater productivity for the Department. However, representatives of the Secretary-General indicated that the introduction of new technology would not improve the quality of the contents of documents that were submitted to the Department. In the view of the Advisory Committee there are two areas that must be addressed. First, the Advisory Committee understands that informal guidelines or presentational standards exist regarding the transmission of documents from author departments to the Department of Conference Services. The Advisory Committee recommends that formal technical standards should be established and that steps should be taken to ensure that those standards are strictly enforced. Secondly, with regard to the substantive or editorial quality of the documents, the Advisory Committee recommends that efforts should be made to upgrade the drafting and editorial abilities of the Secretariat as a whole, inter alia, through the expansion of efforts by the Training Service in this area.

5. With regard to translation (paras. 12-19), the Committee notes that the present standards do not incorporate the element of self-revision and that the Secretary-General is now proposing new standards that incorporate this aspect of the work. The Advisory Committee also recalls the statement by the Secretary-General in paragraph 15 of his report that the Department of Conference Services "intended to aim at an eventual target for self-revision of up to 45 per cent of the translation workload". The Committee notes, however, that the Secretary-General is proposing a revision of 40 per cent. The reasons for this were not fully convincing to the Advisory Committee. In the view of the Committee, technological advances and further efforts employed in the training of translators should result in more work that would be subject to self-revision. The Advisory Committee therefore recommends that the target of 45 per cent should be maintained. If that target were applied to a notional translation job of 150 standard final pages (49,500 words) the following would result:

	<u>Current standards</u> (workdays)	<u>Revised standards</u> (workdays)	
		40 per cent self-revision	45 per cent self-revision
Translators	30.0	18.0	16.5
Self-revisers	-	14.1	15.8
Revisers	<u>10.0</u>	<u>6.0</u>	<u>5.5</u>
Total	<u>40.0</u>	<u>38.1</u>	<u>37.8</u>

6. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 20 of the Secretary-General's report that no standards currently exist for reproduction. The Committee also notes that the Secretary-General's proposals contained in paragraphs 21 to 24 are experimental. In this connection, the Committee was also informed that those standards were not reached through an exhaustive study. In the view of the Committee, reproduction is affected not only by the quality of staff services but also by the use of modern efficient equipment. The Advisory Committee notes the difference between the standards applied at Headquarters and at the United Nations Office at Geneva. The Committee understands that that is largely due to the different configurations of equipment at the two centres. That being the case, the Advisory Committee recommends that the figure of 20,000-page impressions should serve as a starting point for Geneva, rather than the 15,000 proposed by the Secretary-General.

7. With respect to interpretation (paras. 25-27), précis-writing (paras. 28-30), verbatim reporting (paras. 31-33) and supporting staff (paras. 34 and 35), no changes are proposed to the workload standards that currently exist. The Advisory Committee examined the areas of interpretation, précis-writing and verbatim reporting in the context of the requirements of temporary versus permanent staff. The information given to the Committee in that regard was not conclusive and the Committee intends to continue examining the cost-effectiveness of using temporary as opposed to permanent staff in the context of its consideration of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993.

8. Section II of the report contains information related to workload statistics for the various conference services in the bienniums 1986-1987 and 1988-1989. The Committee notes that this information has been provided in response to its request. 3/ The Committee continues to be dissatisfied with the situation at Vienna and intends to pursue that question in the context of its consideration of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993.

9. For comparative purposes, the Advisory Committee requested the specialized agencies to provide information concerning workload standards for their conference-servicing staff.

10. According to information provided by the International Monetary Fund, there are no official work standards for language service staff. Translators and revisers are expected to produce an average of not less than 1,500 and 3,000 words per day, respectively. There are no guidelines for typists, proof-readers and interpreters.

11. The World Health Organization (WHO) indicated that conference-servicing staff are expected to produce the following number of standard pages per workday: translators (5 pages), revisers (10 pages), editors (30 pages), proofreaders (30 pages), proofreaders of publications (50 pages), and proofreaders of official records (100 pages). On average, revisers produce 15 pages of summary records per day and typists 5,500 words per day. With respect to interpretation, WHO, as well as the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the World Intellectual Property Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Meteorological Organization and the Universal Postal Union (UPU) apply the workload standards for interpreters as defined by the Agreement between the

Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (CCAQ) and the International Association of Conference Interpreters. That Agreement establishes the maximum workload for free-lance interpreters as two meetings a day and states that an interpreter should not be called upon to work for more than eight meetings a week. "Meeting" means a total period of two and one half to a maximum of three hours from the time the interpreter is required to be on duty.

12. The Advisory Committee also understands that, with respect to translators, revisers, editors and précis-writers, a number of agencies and offices apply the workload standards defined by the Agreement between the CCAQ and the International Association of Conference Translators. However, this Agreement applies only to short-term employment in the above-mentioned categories.

13. ILO indicated that translators produce an average of 1,750 words per person per day, while revisers produce 3,500 words per person per day.

14. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) standards for interpretation are eight meetings a week consisting of a maximum of two 3-hour meetings per day. For précis-writing, ITU has specific standards depending on the grade-level of the staff member and the length of the meeting. On average, translators produce between 4,000 and 7,500 words per person per day depending on the language and revisers between 8,000 and 18,000 words per person per day. Proofreaders produce 60 pages per day, on average. With regard to reproduction, the ITU workshops are equipped to produce a maximum of 95 million pages a year.

15. UNESCO has standards of production for translators ranging from three and one half pages to six pages per person per day depending on the language. For typing, UNESCO requires 4 to 11 pages per person per day after composition, layout and rereading.

16. FAO indicates that average production in composition typing pools is 5,500 words per person per day and 3,500 words per person per day in audio-typing pools. For translator/revisers, FAO has used 1,800 words per day as the standard production to determine the 1990 key unit costs. For reproduction, an average of 14,425 pages per day has been used. For verbatim reporting FAO hires people to service two meetings per day, which should not exceed six hours in duration.

17. UPU uses standards of 1,875 words per person per day for translators, 4,500 words per person per day for revisers and 3,000 words per person per day for typists. There are no standards for reproduction.

18. The Advisory Committee points out that workload standards are intended to be indicators of general applicability that can be used as a basis for a standardized approach to the calculation of conference-servicing costs. However, as indicated above, except for interpretation, for which there exists an agreement that is generally applied by a number of the agencies, there are no unified workload standards for conference-servicing staff in the United Nations system. The Advisory Committee recommends that the Secretariat, in the context of the appropriate inter-agency consultations, should explore the possibilities of introducing uniform standards wherever possible in those

areas which are not currently covered. The Advisory Committee requests the Secretary-General to report to it on progress achieved in this regard.

19. Subject to its observations in paragraphs 3, 5, 6 and 18 above, the Advisory Committee recommends approval of the workload standards as indicated in the annex to the present report.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-second Session, Supplement No. 7 (A/42/7), para. 29.18.

2/ Ibid., Forty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 7 and corrigenda (A/44/7 and Corr.1 and 2), para. 29.22.

3/ Ibid., paras. 29.18-29.21.

ANNEX

Standard requirements for conference services costs

1. Documentation (pre-session, in-session and post-session)

- (a) Translation: 1 workday for every 1,650 words
- (b) Revision: 1 workday for every 4,950 words
- (c) Self-revision: 1 workday for every 1,400 words
- (d) Typing: 1 workday for every 4,290 words of original language text
1 workday for every 2,145 words of final translated text
- (e) Reproduction and distribution:

The standard roll figure for each language used for costing purposes for Headquarters meetings is as follows:

	<u>Arabic</u>	<u>Chinese</u>	<u>English</u>	<u>French</u>	<u>Russian</u>	<u>Spanish</u>
Pre-session, in-session and post-session documentation	600	200	4 200	1 500	500	750

2. Meeting services

- (a) Interpretation: 1.5 workdays per meeting (of 2.5 to 3 hours' duration) per language for English, French, Russian and Spanish;
2 workdays per meeting per language for Arabic and Chinese
- (b) Supporting staff:
 - Conference officer: 1 workday for a meeting of 50 or more participants; 0.5 workday for a meeting of less than 50 participants
 - Documentation distribution clerk: 0.5 workday per meeting

3. Summary records

- (a) Précis-writing/translation: 3 workdays of précis-writing per meeting; 2 workdays of translation per language per meeting
- (b) Revision: 0.5 workday per language per meeting
- (c) Reproduction and distribution:

The standard roll figures used for summary records of Headquarters meetings are as follows:

<u>Arabic</u>	<u>Chinese</u>	<u>English</u>	<u>French</u>	<u>Russian</u>	<u>Spanish</u>
550	200	3 500	1 500	400	650

For costing purposes in calculating page impressions, it is assumed that each summary record will consist of 15 pages of printed text.

4. Verbatim records

- (a) Verbatim reporting: 4 workdays per meeting per language
- (b) Verbatim revision: 1 workday per meeting per language
- (c) Reproduction and distribution:

The standard roll figures used for verbatim records of Headquarters meetings are as follows:

<u>Arabic</u>	<u>Chinese</u>	<u>English</u>	<u>French</u>	<u>Russian</u>	<u>Spanish</u>
500	200	3 400	1 000	400	500

For costing purposes, in calculating page impressions, it is assumed that each verbatim record will consist of 30 pages of printed text.