

UNITED NATIONS

SECRETARIAT

ST/AI/189
7 November 1969

ADMINISTRATIVE INSTRUCTION

To: Members of the Staff

Subject: REGULATIONS FOR THE CONTROL AND LIMITATION
OF DOCUMENTATION

INTRODUCTION

1. The directives set out below supersede those in document ST/AFS/AI/99 of 20 August 1953. They are issued in accordance with the policy expressly endorsed by the General Assembly that there should be a continuing process of acquainting members of the Secretariat with the rules concerning the control and limitation of documentation and apply to all documents, including documents for meetings, papers for conferences and seminars, and studies and reports issued by the Secretariat. Addenda to these directives will be issued from time to time, describing in greater detail specific measures for achieving economies in documentation. The drafting and editing instructions in the series ST/Drafting Manual/...., some of which are out of print or obsolete, will be revised and reissued as necessary.

SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

2. The universally accepted judgement that the documentation of the United Nations is excessive and should be controlled and limited was first recognized by the General Assembly in its resolution 593 (VI) of 4 February 1952 on the control and limitation of documentation, which has been followed by a series of other decisions on the subject, of which resolution 2292 (XXII) of 8 December 1967 is the latest. By that resolution, the General Assembly, after considering a report by the Secretary-General^{1/} based on a study by the Publications Board, expressly endorsed certain recommendations made by the Publications Board.

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-second Session, Annexes, agenda item 81, document A/6675.

3. In accordance with paragraph 2 of resolution 2292 (XXII), the Secretary-General issued an information paper on 14 March 1968 (A/INF/124) in which he set forth the policies laid down by the General Assembly regarding the control and limitation of documentation, gave details of the recommendations it had approved and provided estimates of the costs of producing various types of documents. Copies of this paper are kept in stock and are made available at the opening meeting of each session of a United Nations body. It should continue to be consulted by members of the Secretariat as the latest formulation of the policy of the General Assembly on the subject.
4. Studies of the documentation problem were carried out during 1968 by the Committee on the Reorganization of the Secretariat^{2/} and the Joint Inspection Unit.^{3/}
5. Steps have been taken to carry out the recommendations endorsed by the General Assembly. With the co-operation of the Secretariat departments concerned, subordinate bodies of the General Assembly and of the Economic and Social Council have reviewed their need for summary records and other documentation. The Office of Conference Services, in its arrangements for the production of official records, has endeavoured to achieve the economies sought by the General Assembly. On an experimental basis, certain types of document that would previously have been issued first in mimeographed form and then printed in the Annexes to the Official Records are being issued once only, by photo-offset from typescript.
6. Nevertheless, the workload of the translation and reproduction services continues to grow. Though the requirements for documentation for meetings are, in general, being met, the increasing backlog of publications - particularly the editions of studies and reports in languages other than the original - is a matter of serious concern.
7. Thus it is clear that greater efforts must be made by all concerned with the preparation and submission of documentation. The main areas in which improvement is necessary are indicated in the following paragraphs.

^{2/} Ibid., Twenty-third Session, Annexes, addendum to agenda item 74 (A/7359), annex.

^{3/} Document A/7576 of 27 July 1969.

8. As the draftsmen of most of the documents placed before United Nations organs and of most publications, staff members have a continuing responsibility for helping to control documentation. Since, with a few exceptions - most of them of a political character - reports and studies are prepared by the Secretariat only as part of planned work programmes adopted after due consideration by the organs concerned, it is the duty of the substantive department concerned to make known to an organ considering a proposal involving additional documentation not only any difficulties it may have in preparing the documentation because of the exigencies of its own work programme but the capacity of the technical services to carry out the work. With the services concerned currently operating at full capacity, it cannot be assumed that requests for additional documentation can be met within the existing capacity of the Office of Conference Services. It follows, therefore, that such additional documentation will require financial provision for editing, translation, typing and reproduction. This aspect of the question must not be overlooked in the preparation of the statement of financial implications that is submitted to any organ or body before it takes a decision on a proposal involving documentation.

9. Greater precision is called for on the part of each branch of the Secretariat that has a documents programme in preparing the estimates of documentation required. Since it is clearly not possible to forecast all the details of the programme with accuracy, it is essential that Documents Control, Office of Conference Services, should be kept informed of any changes in the estimates as they occur, particularly in view of the fact that if the estimates and deadlines have not been reasonably established, it will be beyond the resources of the Office of Conference Services to complete the work in time. In addition, if it appears that a report cannot be made available to the requesting organ or body by the required date, the substantive department should consult with the officers of the body concerned to determine whether the item to which it relates should be deferred to a later session.

10. Staff members are required to draft reports and studies in a spirit of economy and in accordance with editorial instructions and directives for the control and limitation of documentation. Observations of these rules can best be assured if the assistance of editorial staff is invoked at all stages of the

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preparation of documents and publications. Editorial Control, the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs in respect of the main documentation of the General Assembly and the Editorial Section of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in respect of the documentation prepared in that Department are responsible, under the Chief Editor, for seeing that all documentation submitted for reproduction and translation conforms to United Nations editorial policy and practice. They are available for consultation and assistance in the preparation of documents and publications and should be consulted at an early stage of the work.

11. Finally, it should be emphasized that the workload of the Office of Conference Services can be much reduced, not only by the elimination of unnecessary material but by the careful preparation of the texts submitted. Clear manuscripts reduce the burden on the typing units of the Office of Conference Services, and full and accurate referencing of material for translation can speed up the work of the translation services. If the original copies of clean manuscripts or of annexed materials are submitted, these may often be reproduced, with little or no further typing, by photo-offset. A further example may be mentioned: scrupulous care is needed to ensure the legibility of copies for translation that have been made on electrostatic copying machines, since failure to check such copies before submission frequently makes it necessary for the entire text to be returned to the submitting department.

DIRECTIVES

1. Staff members, in carrying out their duties, shall observe the policy of the General Assembly and the related specific recommendations regarding the control and limitation of documentation (see document A/INF/124, paras. 2-6). Staff members providing services to organs or bodies shall advise the officers and members of the organ or body concerned of such policy and recommendations in applicable situations.
2. The secretary of each organ or body, in bringing to its attention the administrative and financial implications of any proposal before it, in accordance with regulations 13.1 and 13.2 of the Financial Regulations of the United Nations, rule 113.1 of the Financial Rules of the United Nations and the relevant provisions of the rules of procedure of United Nations organs, shall see to it that the administrative and financial implications of any documentation called for under that proposal are included. Even if the proposal does not call expressly for a report or other document as such, any documentary implications it may have shall be estimated and costed. In respect of a study or a series of documents of an estimated length of twenty pages or more, a statement of administrative and financial implications, based on a general indication of the work to be done and an estimate of the length of the documents to be issued, shall be prepared by the substantive unit and the executive office of the department concerned, in consultation with the Budget Division of the Office of the Controller and the Executive Office of the Office of Conference Services, and submitted in writing in the name of the Secretary-General. For a document of less than twenty pages, the statement of financial implications may be made orally on the basis of the cost figures provided in document A/INF/124. The statement shall be submitted in good time for consideration before the body takes its decision on the proposal.
3. Proposals by substantive departments for studies and other documentation shall be presented to organs and bodies only in formal submissions in the name of the Secretary-General and staff members shall not make suggestions informally. Substantive departments, before initiating or continuing studies relating to earlier resolutions of organs, shall re-examine the necessity of the work in the light of subsequent relevant policy decisions.

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4. Staff members shall aim at brevity, both in drafting documents to be issued by the Secretariat and in planning or drafting, in consultation with the officers of an organ or with delegations, documents such as reports of organs or bodies or rapporteurs' reports.
5. The substantive departments, in preparing documents, shall make sure that there is no overlapping with material prepared for other projects and that repetitious or extraneous material is not included. Annexed material shall be kept to a minimum. Material readily available in the Official Records or other publications shall not be reproduced in subsequent documents; a suitable reference to indicate where such material can be found is sufficient.^{1/}
6. Substantive departments shall be responsible for ensuring that authors reference manuscripts thoroughly and for attaching copies of previously translated material in each language in which it is available. If a manuscript consists mainly of previously translated material,^{2/} they shall, wherever reasonable, submit the text in all working languages, flagging any passages that require further work by the translators.
7. Each branch of the Secretariat that has a documents and publications programme shall keep Documents Control, Office of Conference Services, fully informed of the details of its documents at all stages of planning and production. Estimates for each year shall be submitted during the preceding year, when requested by Documents Control, on the forms provided. These estimates shall be updated at intervals as requested by Documents Control. In addition, the submitting department shall inform Documents Control whenever there is a substantial change in the estimated length of documents or date of submission. If Documents Control is not kept informed of such changes or if the agreed deadline for the submission of documents is not maintained, the Office of Conference Services will not be in a position to complete the work on time.
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- ^{1/} It is recognized that it may be necessary to provide participants in meetings with information concerning the background of agenda items. Such information, however, should be presented as briefly as possible and should rely on references instead of quotations from any documents that can be made available to the participants.
- ^{2/} For example, a final report adopted after consideration of a draft report.

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8. Where the directives for the control of documentation have manifestly not been followed, the Office of Conference Services is authorized and directed to return to the originating departments manuscripts that have been submitted for translation and reproduction.

9. The Chief Editor, Editorial Control, the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs, the Editorial Section of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and Documents Control shall be responsible for ensuring the execution of these directives in their respective fields of competence. They shall be consulted, as necessary, at all stages of the planning and development of studies and reports.
