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PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1980-1981  
PATTERN OF CONFERENCES

Workload standards for technical and complementary conference  
servicing staff

Eighth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative  
and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on workload standards for technical and complementary conference-servicing staff (A/C.5/35/28). The report has been submitted in response to recommendation 7 in chapter VI of the report of the Committee on Conferences to the General Assembly at its thirty-fourth session; 1/ the Assembly adopted those recommendations in its decision 34/405 of 1 November 1979. In recommendation 7, the Secretary-General was requested "to study the feasibility of establishing further workload standards, in particular for technical and complementary conference servicing staff, and to submit a report thereon, through the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, to the Assembly at its thirty-fifth session".

2. As can be seen from paragraphs 70 and 71 of the report of the Committee on Conferences to the General Assembly at its thirty-fourth session, 1/ the recommendation was directed to categories of conference-servicing staff other than the staff of the Department of Conference Services, for whom workload standards had already been established (see paras. 6-8 below).

3. In his report on workload standards for technical and complementary conference-servicing staff, the Secretary-General identifies six categories of staff by function: sound technicians; conference officers; messengers; security guards; meeting room attendants; and information officers and supporting staff (A/C.5/35/28, para. 2).

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1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 32 (A/34/32 and Corr.1).

4. In paragraph 5 of his report, the Secretary-General states that with respect to the first five categories "it is not considered possible to establish standards which are universally applicable to conferences since requirements in these functions tend to vary widely from one meeting to another depending on the characteristics of a given meeting". Some examples are given in paragraph 6 of document A/C.5/35/28. In response to inquiries, the Advisory Committee was provided with additional oral information on why the Secretary-General had concluded that the number of variables was too great to allow him to work out reliable workload indicators of general applicability. While the Advisory Committee does not disagree with that conclusion, it is of the view that more information should have been included in the report to support the Secretary-General's conclusion. The report as it stands, cannot be regarded as an adequate response to recommendation 7 in chapter VI of the report of the Committee on Conferences.

5. The Advisory Committee notes the Secretary-General's statement in paragraph 8 of his report that workload standards and staffing patterns for information coverage of meetings are being developed by the Department of Public Information. The Committee trusts that the Secretary-General will transmit the proposed standards and patterns to it in due course. The Committee also notes his statement in paragraph 7 that the Office of General Services has developed a cost-estimating guide containing sets of requirements geared essentially to the various types of conference room facilities available at Headquarters.

6. As regards standards for the Department of Conference Services, the Committee on Conferences agreed that they should be reviewed from time to time. 2/ The Advisory Committee recalls in this connexion that, in November 1976, it addressed a request to the Secretary-General for workload and other data that could be used as a basis for a standardized approach to the calculation of the financial implications of conferences and meetings. The Committee requested in particular that a standard list of conference-servicing requirements be drawn up indicating the number of language and ancillary staff needed for a 10-meeting week. In October 1977, the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management communicated to the Advisory Committee for information and comment a statement containing: (a) standard staffing requirements for a 10-meeting week regarding interpretation, pre-session, in-session and post-session documentation and summary records (b) a schedule of meeting-servicing staff with a brief description of their functions; and (c) the latest information regarding the daily salary rates on a short-term basis for the staff required to provide the basic meeting-services functions the method of costing travel and the unit costs for reproduction and distribution. The proposed staffing requirements for a 10-meeting week excluded a number of support functions (such as those of editors, proof-readers, documents control clerks, reproduction and distribution staff).

7. In November 1977, the Advisory Committee informed the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management that it found the proposed workload standards

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2/ Ibid., para. 70.

for Conference Services staff generally satisfactory, subject to observations with respect to the proposed ratios of senior translators to translators and typists to translators. 3/ The Committee also noted that proper standards had not been worked out for the auxiliary personnel engaged in conference activities.

8. In the course of its examination of the report in document A/C.5/35/28, the Advisory Committee was informed by the representatives of the Secretary-General that the workload standards introduced in late 1977 have remained the same. Detailed information on the standards currently applied by the Secretary-General in the calculation of the financial implications of conferences and meetings is contained in the annex to the present report. The Committee intends to review these workload standards from time to time in the light of the effects of the technological innovations in the production of the publications and documentation of the Organization.

9. In the interest of standardization of nomenclature, the Committee recommends that the Secretary-General should prepare a complete schedule of titles of conference-servicing staff with a clear definition of their functions. The schedule should apply to all United Nations conference centres.

10. The Advisory Committee recommends also that the Secretary-General should submit to it in spring 1981 a progress report on the question of workload standards for conference-servicing personnel including relevant information on the results of the interagency meetings on language arrangements, documentation and publications.

11. The Committee will revert to this question when it considers the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1982-1983.

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3/ The Advisory Committee understands that the workload standards were subsequently amended to reflect its recommendations.

ANNEX

Standard requirements for conference services costs

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

- (a) Translation: 1 work-day for every 1,650 words;
- (b) Revision: 1 work-day for every 4,950 words.
- (c) Typing: (i) 1 work-day for every 1,650 words of translation.  
(ii) 1 work-day for every 3,300 words of original language text (i.e., copy-typing);
- (d) 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>
<u>Pre-session and post-session documentation</u>	600	200	3,500	1,250	500	650
<u>In-session documentation</u>	500	200	3,000	1,000	400	500

2. Meeting services

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

3. Summary records

- (a) Précis-writing/translation: 3 work-days of précis-writing per meeting;  
2 work-days of translation per language per meeting.
- (b) Revision: 0.5 work day per language per meeting.

/...

(c) Typing: 3 work-days per language per meeting.

(d) 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>
500	200	3,000	1,000	400	500

For costing purposes, in calculating page impressions it is assumed that each summary record will consist of 13 pages of printed text.

#### 4. Verbatim records

(a) Verbatim reporting: 4 work-days per meeting per language;

(b) Verbatim revision: 1 work-day per meeting per language;

(c) Typing: 4 work-days per meeting per language;

(d) 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	3,000	1,000	400	500

For costing purposes, in calculating page impressions, it is assumed that each verbatim record will consist of 25 pages of printed text.

5. For budgeting purposes, there are additional staffing requirements in respect of meetings to be held away from a headquarters location. For example, the number of revisers should be increased by 50 per cent and the number of typists by 30 per cent in anticipation of uneven workload requirements during the course of the meetings. There will also be a need to provide for supervisory and other support personnel in the case of meetings to be held away from a headquarters location.

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