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QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION

JOINT INSPECTION UNIT

The location of United Nations Information Centres (UNICs)

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "The location of United Nations Information Centres (UNICs)" (JIU/REP/85/12).

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\* A/41/50.

The location of United Nations Information Centres (UNICs)

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## I. UNITED NATIONS INFORMATION CENTRES AS LIVE AGENTS

1. The Department of Public Information came into being almost 40 years ago at the will of the 50 Member States then comprising the General Assembly of the United Nations. 1/ Its goal was to promote an informed understanding of the work and purposes of the United Nations among the peoples of the world. The Department of Public Information was from the outset expected to function through "branch offices" in selected countries and regions. The Secretary-General, in 1947, noted in his annual report on the work of the Organization that "the development of informed world opinion and intelligent support of the United Nations depends as much on the establishment of a wide and well organized network of information-distributing offices at appropriate world centres as on an adequate and efficient public information service at Headquarters". 2/ In 1952, the General Assembly widened the scope, giving the Department of Public Information approval to establish and maintain a system of information centres on an adequate regional and/or linguistic basis with due regard to actual varying needs. 3/

2. The centres act as conductors of information from Headquarters to the people and institutions of the areas they serve. The General Assembly regularly defines the themes it wishes the Department of Public Information and the centres to promulgate world-wide: international peace and security, disarmament, peace-keeping operations, decolonization, the promotion of human rights, the struggle against racial discrimination and the integration of women in the development process. Two other themes have held some prominence among those seizing world attention: the new international economic order and the new world information and communications order. Both have raised various issues which divide world opinion and the Department of Public Information must present the issues disinterestedly and with balance at all times. In doing so, the Department and the United Nations Information Centres (UNICs) honour the injunction placed on them not to spread propaganda, but to disseminate the facts and trends as they emerge from the actions and deliberations of the world body. The work of the United Nations in the social and economic fields and, especially, its operational activities for development provide important material for UNICs to disseminate.

3. In carrying out their duties, the UNICs deal with a variety of partners and clients: government ministries and personnel, the mass media, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the specialized agencies of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations, educational authorities, universities, schools, libraries, trade-unions, business and professional organizations. The UNICs organize seminars and exhibitions and UNIC directors lecture on United Nations topics to interested groups; but apart from being speakers and distributors of information, directors have to be listeners in order to develop a sensitivity to the characteristics and needs of the country or region they serve. In this way, they can advise the Department on Public Information on how best to make information and communications fit the environment in which it must work. There is therefore a two-way flow of information in which UNICs are engaged:

(a) A flow to their constituents on daily happenings and longer-term issues; and

(b) A flow to Headquarters on the perceptions and needs of constituents.

4. This does not imply a completely negative role of "information-distributing" for UNICs. The needs of recipients have to be known and addressed if news is to find its mark; dissemination is not all. Regional and national preoccupations provide a frame within which items of United Nations news and analyses of United Nations successes and failures must fit. Clearly all regions are not equally endowed; the General Assembly itself, in its resolution 1405 (XIV) of 1 December 1959, sought to have new information centres set up "particularly in those regions where mass information media are less developed". In the latter circumstance, UNICs and their directors have to find creative methods of increasing public awareness of and interest in the United Nations. Not least involved here is the capacity of those supervising UNICs to make United Nations information complementary and not antagonistic to positive national information efforts. For this reason, UNICs try to supply Governments with whatever information they may need on United Nations matters. A successful UNIC is a live agent of the United Nations in the field.

5. The services offered by UNICs embrace the press, publications, radio and television, films, graphics and exhibitions as well as public liaison. Each centre maintains a reference library of United Nations publications and documentation; this service is of particular interest to researchers and writers on subjects related to the Organization, though a UNIC's success stands on its ability to reach the general public and not merely small groups of specialists. The mainstream responsibility of a UNIC is to reach the general public. To this main purpose, serving smaller groups of specialists is a subsidiary task.

6. UNICs provide a wide range of services to other United Nations departments and offices such as Personnel, the United Nations Postal Administration and the Dag Hammarskjöld Library. The centres conduct recruitment campaigns, promote sales of United Nations stamps and carry on liaison with depository libraries of United Nations documents. UNICs assist visiting senior United Nations officials by organizing press conferences, sometimes providing translation and secretarial services. Many of these duties are not strictly informational.

7. Over the years, the General Assembly has consistently kept an eye on the functioning of the Department of Public Information and the UNICs, making recommendations for improvements and for strengthening the performance of the centres. In 1978, the General Assembly set up a Committee on Information to examine and report on issues emerging from new aspects of information and communications. Every year since then, the work of the Department of Public Information and the centres has come under its close scrutiny. In 1982, the General Assembly approved the recommendations of the Committee and set certain parameters for the establishment of new centres as follows:

"In countries where the size, population, the state of media and non-governmental and other organizations, or the role being played by their Governments in United Nations affairs warrant it, separate United Nations information centres should be established, as and when resources become available." 4/

These parameters are wide in scope but they point to areas where questions need to be asked and answered before a decision is taken to establish a new centre. The scarcity of resources for the setting up of new centres is also touched upon - new centres are to be considered only "as and when resources become available". If a UNIC is therefore to be a live agent of the Department of Public Information in the field, the authorities must first study the conditions in which it is destined to operate in order to come to a sound decision on whether a centre in that place and in those circumstances is likely to be viable. This line of thought is pursued further in chapter IV of the present report.

8. Meanwhile, we will take a closer look at the main considerations which have so far governed the setting up of UNICs throughout the world and touch on some of the special characteristics which distinguish them.

## II. SOME ASPECTS OF ORGANIZATION

9. The first 12 UNICs were established in the following cities: Washington, D.C., (October 1946), Copenhagen (December 1946), New Delhi and London (January 1947), Geneva (February 1947), Paris and Rio de Janeiro (March 1947), Mexico City (August 1947), Prague (December 1947), Moscow (April 1948), Buenos Aires and Sydney (November 1948). The countries hosting these early UNICs had largely shared in the defeat of the common enemy in the Second World War and had dreams of a world organization that would make war a thing of the past. The Geneva Centre differed from the others in that it had been inherited from the League of Nations.

10. The period 1948 to 1965 saw a sizeable increase in centres from 12 to 49 (see figure 1 below). This period coincided with the movement to independence of many former colonies in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. These countries had gained encouragement and support from the positive human goals of the United Nations Organization and conceived that as new nations they too had a role in propagating its values. Since 1965, the rate of growth has declined to about 1 per year.

11. While the official United Nations languages are mainly those in which United Nations information is disseminated, work is also done in other official or commonly used languages such as Hindi, Thai, Swahili and Portuguese. Good linguistic coverage is clearly essential to spreading knowledge of United Nations progress and activities. Resources, both financial and human, within the Department of Public Information, do not permit as much work of this kind to be done as would be desirable, but valuable assistance for language translation comes from non-governmental organizations.

12. Political considerations have of course loomed large in decisions to open new centres. Indeed, a Government's commitment to the idea of a centre is a necessary pre-condition for its viability in a given country. Governments have therefore from time to time offered to host UNICs in their countries and such requests have usually been accepted by the General Assembly. Table 1 below shows present regional coverage by UNICs.

Figure 1 - UNCIs: Pattern of growth  
 (1945-1985)

UNCIs

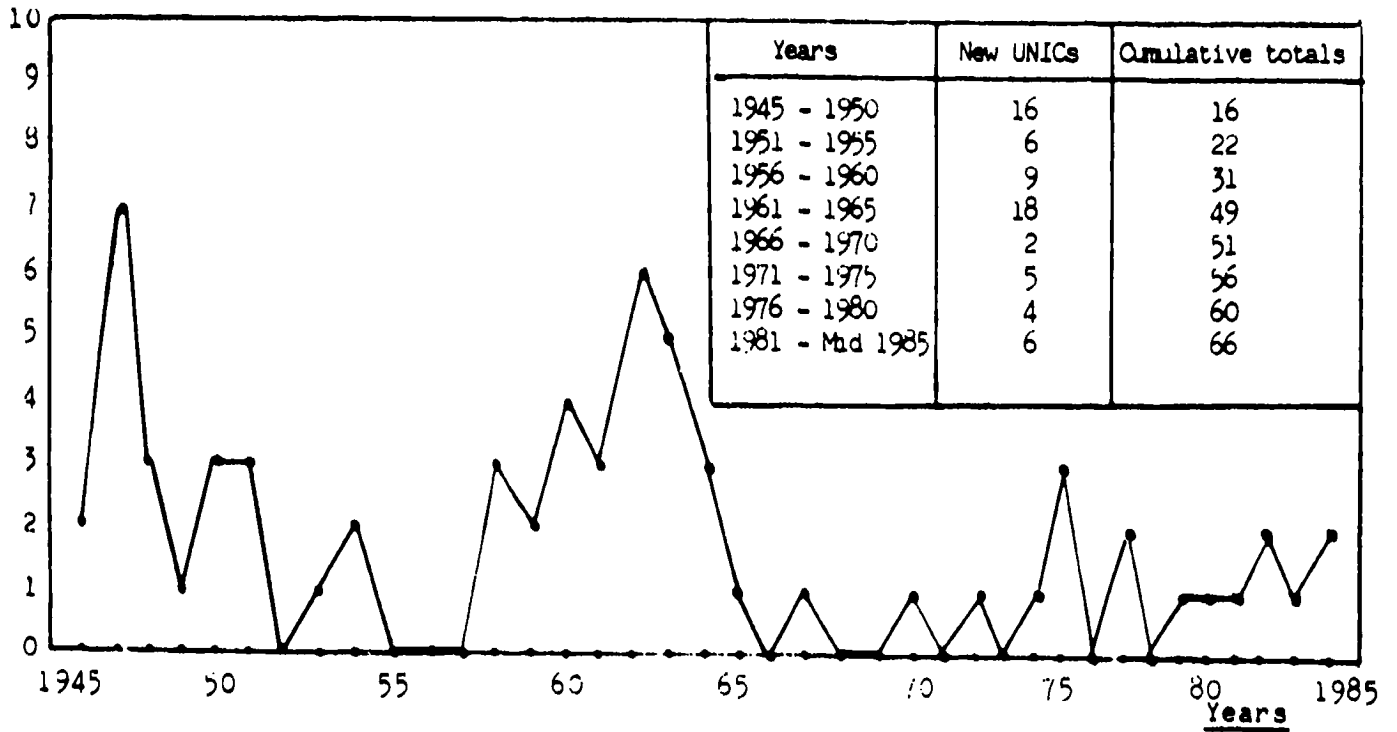


Table 1

Population nationally covered by UNICs by region (1984)

Region	Total estimated population (Millions)	National population covered (Millions)	Percentage of population covered	Total number of countries	Number covered by UNICs	Number of UNICs
1. North America	258	232	90	2	1	1
2. Latin America and the Caribbean	389	381	98	33	31	12
3. Africa	485	426	88	52	42	23
4. Middle East	40	37	92	14	12	4
5. Asia and the Pacific	2 464	1 206	49	40	32	12
6. Western Europe	453	453	100	24	24	10
7. Eastern Europe and USSR	387	387	100	11	11	4
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>4 476</b>	<b>3 122</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>66</b>

13. Table 1. v flatter only to deceive. It shows that some 153 countries, or 70 per cent of world population, are covered by UNICs. This "coverage" is more apparent than real: only 66 countries have UNICs actually established within their borders. The other 87 countries are covered by 33 of these UNICs based elsewhere. Adequate coverage of other countries by UNICs suffers from a shortage of funds for travel and language services as well as from deficient communications and insufficient contact between the "central" UNIC and its constituents in other countries. In these circumstances, the majority of the countries "covered" receive only a nominal service from the central UNIC. Much less substantive information on the United Nations is systematically reaching countries than a literal examination of the scope of centres would suggest.

14. Table 2 below shows the number of countries covered by individual UNICs. Two UNICs individually cover five countries and two others each cover seven countries. The UNIC having the largest jurisdiction covers 14 countries, followed by another covering 9.

Table 2

Number of countries covered by individual UNICs (1984)

Number of UNICs	Number of countries covered per UNIC	Total number of countries covered	Percentage of total number of UNICs
33	1	33	50
12	2	24	18
11	3	33	17
4	4	16	6
2	5	10	3
2	7	14	3
1	9	9	1
1	14	14	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>100</b>

15. Language, cultural and political differences as well as geography can make the task of UNICs more difficult. The Bangkok office, for instance, apart from its special duties for the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), is responsible for United Nations information to seven countries of different and even opposing political systems. The Dakar office covers seven countries whose languages include Portuguese, French and English. The jurisdiction of the Port of Spain UNIC embraces 14 different island countries in the Caribbean. "Sydney" covers nine countries separated by vast distances in the Pacific region. Most of these arrangements for multiple coverage do not appear viable in the light of the existing human, financial and technical constraints.

16. UNICs cater to varying sizes of population: "New Delhi" with a staff of nine in theory has to reach a population of 735 million, speaking several different languages; "Rio de Janeiro" with a staff of seven serves 130 million in Brazil. At the other end of the scale, "Port Moresby" headed by a Resident Representative and having responsibility for Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands covers a total population of 3.5 million with a staff of four persons. "Maseru" (Lesotho), also headed by a Resident Representative, covers 1.4 million with a staff of four. While there may be no scientific basis for relating the number of staff to population, there is some doubt whether the staff resources assigned to UNICs properly reflect the scope and singularity of individual centres. It may well be also that, the Department of Public Information being short of modern communications, technology cannot properly maximize the use of the staff resources it has.



17. It seems worthy of note that neither the People's Republic of China (population of over 1 billion) nor Canada, which has consistently had a significant voice in world councils, possess a UNIC.

18. A brief word on the mix of Professional staff serving these centres.

1984		
<u>In developing countries</u>	41 Professionals (58 per cent)	51 UNICs
1984		
<u>In developed countries</u> (including Eastern Europe)	30 Professionals (42 per cent)	15 UNICs

The present distribution of Professional staff in UNICs (see graphic above) suggests a comparative scarcity of Professionals in developing countries. Fifteen of the developed country Professionals are in the Geneva office which is something of a microcosm of the Department of Public Information in Europe and has to serve many major international conferences. At the other end of the scale, Brazzaville has a staff of one, a director, who functions, since 1983 when the arrangement began, without official premises.

19. The highest-ranking directors, eight in number, are at the D-1 or D-2 level; they are posted to Beirut, London, Moscow, New Delhi, Nairobi, Paris, Tokyo and Washington, D.C. The directors of the United Nations Information Services at the regional commissions are at present at the P-5 or P-4 level. Five UNICs (8 per cent) have women directors. A total of 28 directors are citizens of developed countries (42 per cent) and 38 (58 per cent) are citizens of developing countries.

20. Slightly fewer than one third of the UNICs (21 out of 66) fall under the direction of UNDP Resident Representatives, who perform this task along with their normal duties.

### III. SOME FINANCIAL ASPECTS

21. The regular budget of the United Nations is the main source of finance for UNICs. UNICs are in the main financed by the regular budget of the United Nations. Governments do contribute, however, in varying measure, to the costs of these centres by providing rent-free premises, utilities and like services or by making cash grants. None the less, the regular budget bears roughly 90 per cent of the total cost of running the centres.

22. The typical centre is staffed by a director supported by three or four administrative and clerical staff, a driver and a messenger. Apart from outlays for these human resource requirements, expenditure normally goes on travel, the purchase and maintenance of equipment, supplies, rents and communications.

23. Just about one third of the total budget of the Department of Public Information is currently spent on operating the UNIC network. Figures stand at an expenditure of \$US 21,676,800 for 1982-1983 and an estimated \$US 23,108,100 for 1984-1985, or 33 per cent in each biennium. Geneva itself had a separate budget of \$US 3,551,100 (5.5 per cent of total) for 1982-1983 and one of \$US 3,728,900 (5.3 per cent of total) for 1984-1985.

24. Overall staff costs (covering four items: "established posts", "general temporary assistance", "common staff costs" and "overtime") consume most of the budget of UNICs. Disbursements for these costs amounted to 81.5 per cent of total costs in 1982-1983 and are an estimated 78.8 per cent in 1984-1985.

25. The next most expensive item, generally speaking, is "rental and maintenance of premises" accounting for 5.7 per cent of total costs for 1982-1983 and an estimated 6.7 per cent for 1984-1985. "Communications" consumed 3.5 per cent in 1982-1983, with an estimated 3.9 per cent for 1984-1985. "Supplies and materials", "furniture and equipment" and "rental and maintenance of equipment" account each for less than 2.5 per cent of the total budget. "Travel of staff" achieved only 1.3 per cent of the total budget for 1982-1983, with a similar percentage applied to the item in the estimates for 1984-1985 (see figure 2 below).

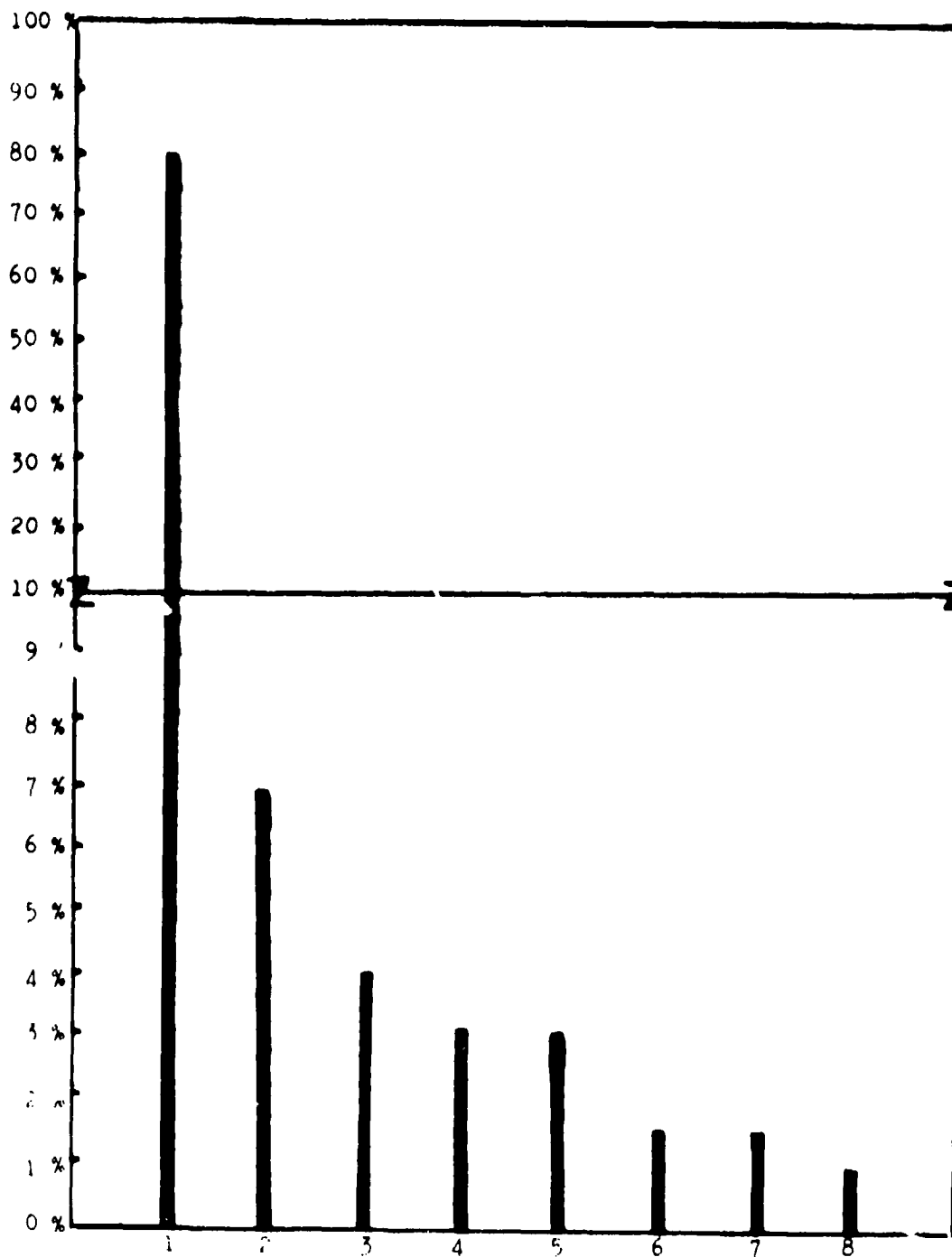
26. Funds for operating expenses appear inadequate. For example, the Port of Spain UNIC, covering 14 Commonwealth Caribbean countries, has a sum of \$US 5,000, or 6.8 per cent of its local currency budget, for travel in 1984. Estimates for 1986-1987 show a minor increase to \$US 7,500 per year, equivalent to 7.3 per cent of the local budget. Sydney, covering nine countries in the vast region, had travel funds of \$US 7,000, or 6.7 per cent of local budget in 1984.

27. Reports by UNIC directors mainly in developing countries indicate that they often find funds inadequate for the satisfactory pursuit of their tasks. Apart from shortages from travel, office space is often insufficient and equipment lacking.

28. The four UNICs that cost most to maintain are London, Washington, D.C., Tokyo and Sydney. Table 3 shows how their expenses compare with four centres in the lower expenditure range. The Department of Public Information, however, receives a substantial subsidy for the Brussels office from the Belgian Government (see figures 3 and 4 below).

29. Of the 56 UNICs reported on in 1982, 22 (a little under 40 per cent) received some contribution from host Governments. The contribution generally covered only a small percentage of the total budget of a local UNIC but 14 host Governments in 1982 contributed over 15 per cent of a UNIC's cost (see figure 3 above). According to 1984 data, Governments from 49 host countries made their contribution by way of salary to general staff members, free rental of premises, free utilities or tax exemptions. In 1985, 11 Governments have signified their intention to make cash contributions which, in the event, will each exceed 15 per cent of the budgets of the UNICs they are subsidizing (see figure 4).

Figure 2 - Distribution of budgeted expenditure on UNICs 1984-1985



- 1 = Total staff costs (79 %)
- 2 = Rental/maintenance of premises (7 %)
- 3 = Communications (4 %)
- 4 = Furniture + equipment (3 %)
- 5 = Supplies + materials (3 %)
- 6 = Rental + maintenance of equipment (1.5 %)
- 7 = Travel of staff (1.5 %)
- 8 = Miscellaneous services (1 %)

Table 3

Comparison of costs of some UNICs

(Examples from upper and lower ranges)

UNIC	1982	1983	1984
1. London	484 708	489 516	463 885
2. Washington, D.C.	244 252	366 048	407 229
3. Tokyo	326 331	367 176	481 352
4. Sydney	186 454	263 982	239 331
5. Lomé*	35 728	24 052	39 786
6. Rangoon	22 039	22 027	23 958
7. Kathmandu	10 744	19 971	16 574
8. Kabul	10 267	13 452	15 259

\* The figures in respect of the four centres in the lower spending category exclude salaries, all of which are paid by UNDP whose Resident Representatives are also directors of the centres.

Figure 3 - Governments' contributions as percentage of UNIC  
local currency budgets (1982)

(Minimum 15 per cent)

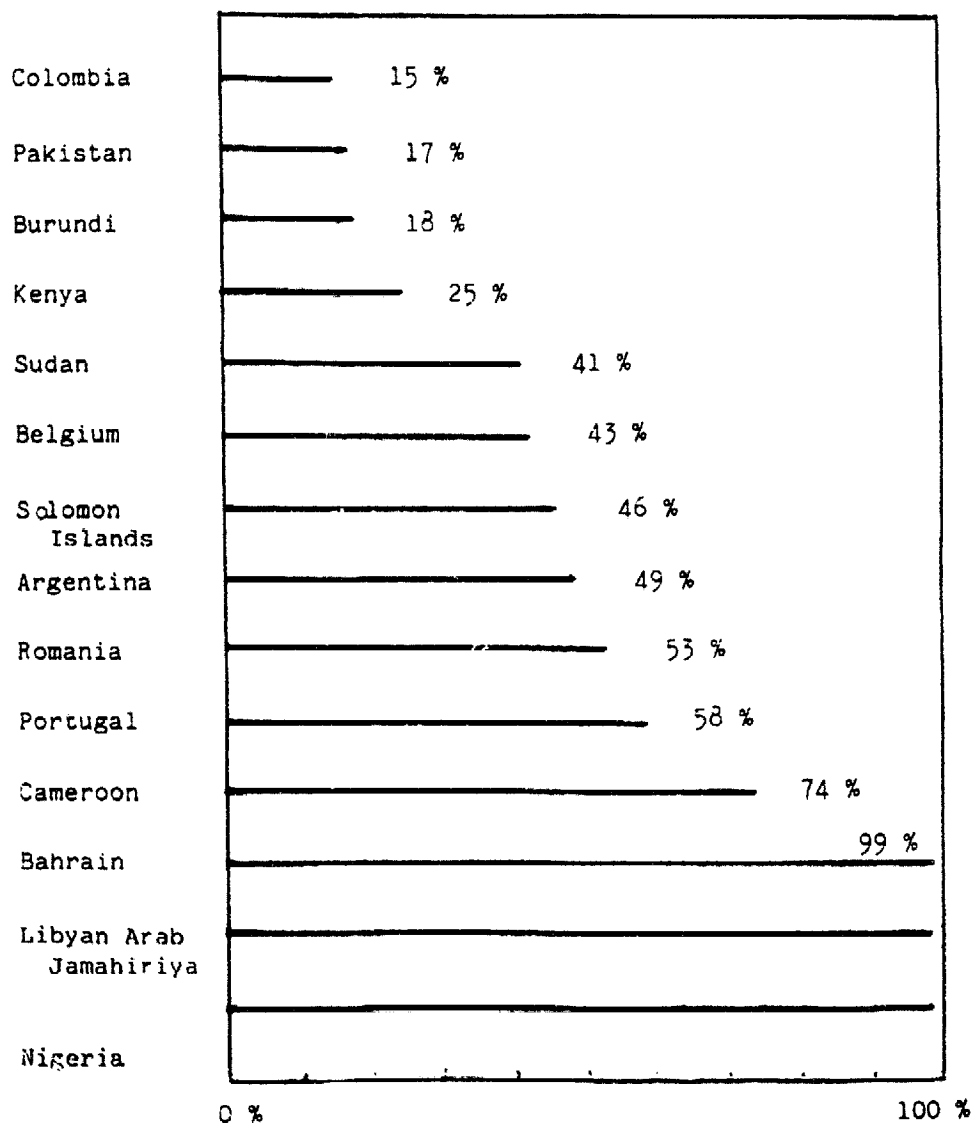
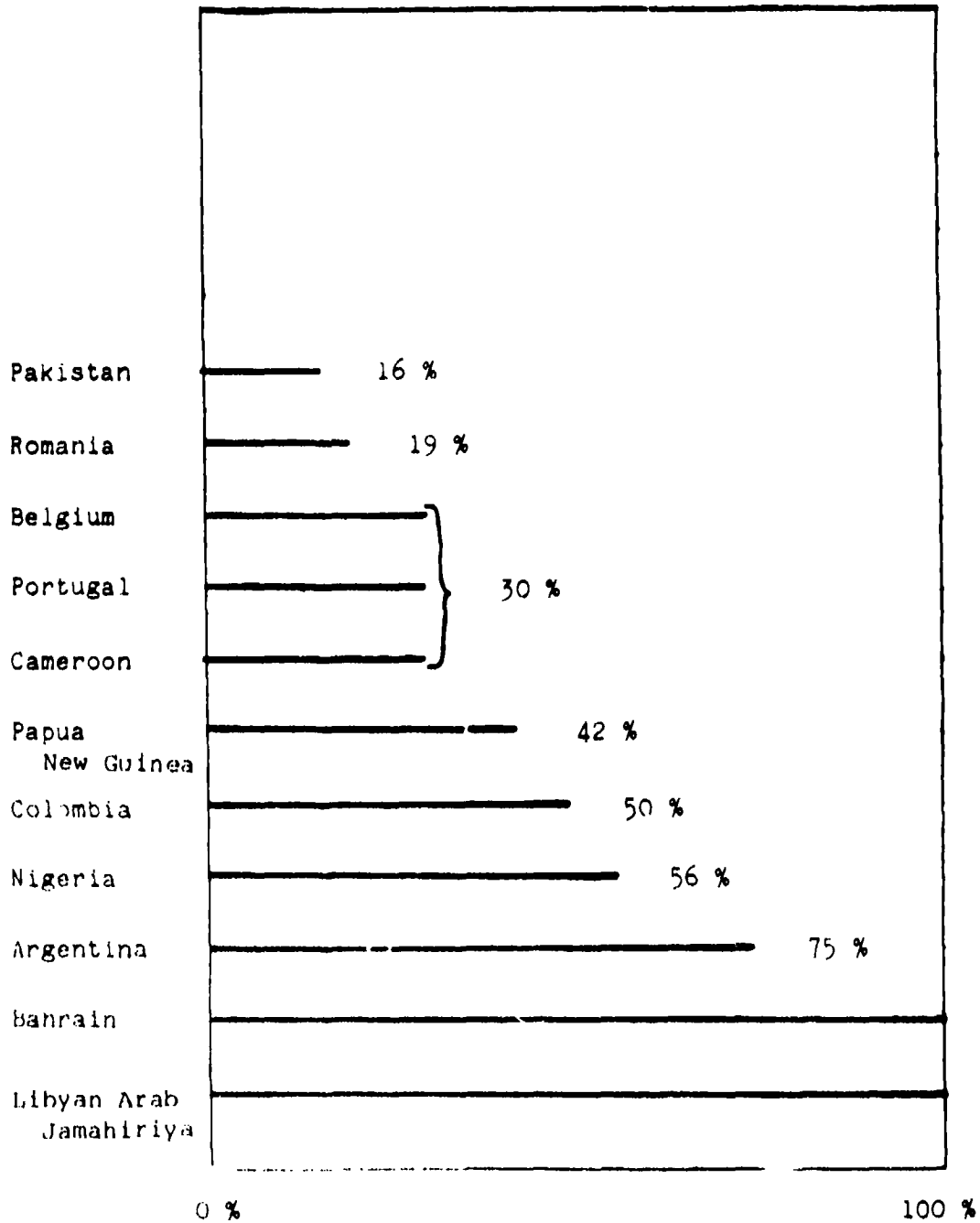


Figure 4 - Governments' anticipated cash contributions as percentage of UNIC local currency budgets (1985)

(Minimum 15 per cent)



30. All in all, it seems that more financial resources need to be directed to the weaker centres if such an increase will enable more information, better conceived and presented, to be issued to the countries that need it.

#### IV. THE LOCATION OF NEW CENTRES

##### A. The Secretary-General and the Department of Public Information

31. The Secretary-General, in seeking to advance the cause of international co-operation and harmony among nations in the attainment of common goals, must have a clear perspective of world opinion and world affairs. He must respond to the pressure of particular happenings as well as be cognizant of broad emerging trends. To assist him in articulating his vision of these events, the Department of Public Information executes, on his behalf, the kind of information programme which would best serve to illuminate and even highlight the prominent international issues of the day. The Secretary-General, understandably therefore, has ultimate responsibility for the network of information centres which carry the message of the United Nations abroad and more especially for their standards of performance. His surveillance of their work is made possible through steady co-operation with individual Governments. It is important that he continue to have and discharge this responsibility which ensures the rational development of the services offered.

32. The Department of Public Information has long experience in supervising the work of the UNICs. Some centres have done well, others have not - for various reasons. Chapters II and III of the present report have attempted to give a brief picture of some organizational and financial aspects which touch upon the work of the centres. The chapters point to what appear to be some imbalances in the resources put into various centres and would suggest that an analysis be made on whether the correct inputs of staff and finance are reaching the several centres and whether the Department "is getting value for money". The Department of Public Information is the "agency" with the technical resources and experience to provide answers to these questions.

##### B. Factors affecting the establishment of centres

33. Three main factors, as we have seen, influenced the location of UNICs:

(a) The political: By 1948, 12 centres had been established in leading capitals. Their choice was political; they were the capitals of countries with the greatest influence in the founding of the United Nations of metropolitan centres with strong cultural and economic links to the main European cities or with potential to provide future leadership in the developing world. Most of the Governments in whose countries these first centres were established make no financial contribution to the operation of the centres. Later, some Governments requested that centres be opened in their countries and gave subsidies of one sort or another to help meet the local costs of running the centres. Three Governments have met all or practically all of the costs of the centres in their countries (see figure 3). Anticipated cash contributions from Governments for 1985 appear in figure 4;

(b) The pragmatic: The view had early been expressed that ultimately information centres should exist in each Member State. In 1952, however, the General Assembly spelt out the requirement that information centres should be established on an adequate regional and/or linguistic basis with due regard to actual varying needs. This requirement opened the way to centres being established with special characteristics (such as languages) being taken into account. All regions were to share in the expansion. A total of 16 centres were opened in the 1950s and 22 in the 1960s, reaching the 50 mark by the end of the decade. The parameters for the choices were quite broad and pragmatic;

(c) The 1982 guidelines: As early as 1978, the Department of Public Information had been enjoined to "pay particular attention to the needs of regions where information media are less well-developed". 5/ The 1982 guidelines, set out in paragraph 33 of the annex to General Assembly resolution 38/82 and quoted, in part, in paragraph 7 of this report, acknowledged the importance of the role of the mass media in the spread of information and drew attention to the fact that the tools of communication (media and re-disseminators) should be at hand to make viable the establishment of new centres wherever conditions promised scope for successful effort.

#### C. Assessing the viability of proposed new centres

34. In recent years, the reports of the Secretary-General on measures to enhance the role of UNICs as well as the recommendations of the Committee on Information responding to the problems being encountered by the Department of Public Information have provided a useful backdrop to this study. These along with the Inspector's study of reports of UNIC directors and his conversations with some of them indicate that optimum performance by many UNICs has suffered, inter alia, from:

(a) The comparative slowness with which UNICs receive and can therefore publicize United Nations news: There is an inherent weakness in the capacity of the Department of Public Information to deliver news to its UNICs compared to the speed and timeliness with which the international wire services disseminate information. The Department does not have the level of integrated telecommunications which would promote substantial improvements in this respect;

(b) Insufficient financial resources to support proper communications within countries: Funds for travel, communications and translation are inadequate for UNICs to reach the breadth of audience they would like to serve or meet the needs for the supply of longer-term background information of the United Nations;

(c) Difficulty of UNICs effectively covering several countries: Individual UNICs charged with supervising the flow of United Nations information to other countries are often able to carry out this function only in name: limited travel funds and the inability to keep in constant touch with local media, government authorities, non-governmental organizations and other interested parties in those countries make it an almost impossible task for a UNIC to perform a viable service outside the country of its location.

35. In these circumstances, it seems that, before a new centre is opened, the Secretary-General should charge the Department of Public Information to provide a strict examination of whether such a new centre is, in the broadest sense, a viable



proposition. The review of the Department should be a technical one, taking the following methodological lines:

(a) The audience: The Department of Public Information should examine the characteristics of the population to be served; the level of literacy; the major language or languages in which communication must take place; the educational infrastructure embracing what institutions exist, such as schools, universities and other adult services both in city and in rural areas; social factors which might affect the work of the UNIC positively or otherwise, for example, is there a record of successful co-operation in groups or associations? To what extent is freedom of expression practised? What is the state of public responsiveness to international concerns? Weighing these characteristics should provide some guidance on whether the prospects are good or not for building up a receptive audience;

(b) The state of communications: This would include an examination of customary means of disseminating news and information; to what extent is coverage achieved by the print media, radio, films or television? What percentages of the population are accessible to the various media? Is there any government plan for improving telecommunications? Is the dissemination of information on the United Nations likely to meet obstacles? Of what kind? Can these be legitimately overcome? Answers to these questions could suggest whether the tools for proper communications are present and will support the proper dissemination of information;

(c) The availability of funds and personnel: The Department of Public Information should examine the human and financial resources at its command. In the present stringency of finances for centres, it appears less than satisfactory to take funds or personnel away from existing centres in order to supply these to new centres, especially if such an action weakens the effectiveness of existing centres and dilutes their capacity to perform. The Inspector has formed the impression that this expedient, which has been used from time to time, while weakening existing work, cannot provide adequate resources for most new centres. The result is therefore more likely to be a general falling off in standards than a real increase or improvement in communication. If funds are not readily available from sources other than the hard-pressed resources now extended to most UNICs, the feasibility of setting up a new centre is put in question. In short, the establishment of a new centre should not depend on funds or personnel shifted from an existing centre unless such funds or personnel are proved to be redundant to the needs of the existing centre.

If an existing centre is unable to carry out its functions and its retention is a drain on resources without the achievement of positive information ends, then, after due consultations with the government concerned, the operation of the centre should cease. Consideration could then be given to budgeting for equivalent funds to be used towards setting up a new more viable centre elsewhere;

(d) The degree of government assistance: The genuine interest and support of a government for the dissemination of information on the United Nations are a sine qua non. Even more to the point is the extent to which a government can meet a fair proportion (if not all) of the expenses of setting up a centre in its country. Where a government can materially assist and where the other considerations set out above yield a positive return, then a new centre should be a viable proposition.

36. In short, the assessment of the Department of Public Information would attempt to judge:

- (a) Public responsiveness to international concerns;
- (b) Resources likely to be available from all sources including Governments;
- (c) Adequacy of the communications infrastructure and system;
- (d) Quality and scope of media facilities and services;
- (e) Any other relevant considerations.

37. A review by the Department of Public Information along the lines suggested above should provide the Secretary-General with the facts necessary to make a judgement on whether a new centre should come into being.

D. Criteria for the location of new centres

38. Assuming that the considerations discussed in section C (paras. 34 and 35) are valid, the following criteria should govern the location of new United Nations Information Centres. These criteria should be met before a new centre is established:

(a) That communications between the Department of Public Information and the proposal centre will allow for rapid contact between the two;

(b) That communications within the country where the centre is to be located are such as to permit the centre to disseminate information to a substantial percentage of the population via the print, aural and visual media. Any mix of media which would give the centre the capacity to reach substantial numbers of the population would be considered acceptable;

(c) That the internal communications system in the form of telephone, electronic communications, road, rail and other transport facilities, etc., are adequate for performing the acknowledged tasks of the centre;

(d) That non-governmental associations, educational/social institutions, and other contact groups which can assist the centre to disseminate United Nations information freely are able and willing to carry out this function;

(e) That, in the light of the present financial stringency,

(i) The Department of Public Information should indicate whether it can find resources for a new centre in circumstances where a particular existing centre may not be operating effectively and funds allocated to it could be budgeted instead for the new centre. The effectiveness of an existing centre should not be prejudiced by the transfer or reduction of personnel from its establishment in order to open a new centre;

- (ii) Any existing centre which cannot carry out its functions owing to circumstances beyond the control of the Department of Public Information should, after appropriate consultations with the government concerned, be closed;
- (iii) The government concerned, having given its political support to the opening of a centre in its country, should, as a token of its interest, be expected to contribute a minimum of 20 per cent of the local costs of the centre;
- (iv) Unless adequate funds for travel, communications and translation (where required) can be provided, no existing centre should be asked to assume responsibility for coverage of another country.

39. These criteria would be a rubric in accordance with which the Department of Public Information can make its review and estimate, for the benefit of Governments, the extent to which a new centre could operate effectively in a given location, taking into account:

- (a) Media services and their capacity to serve a substantial part of the population;
- (b) Communications system and its capacity to contribute to speedy dissemination of information;
- (c) Actual or potential interest of people and groups in the United Nations;
- (d) Possibility of securing finance from the United Nations;
- (e) Political and financial support of Governments.

40. If the above-mentioned steps are taken, the Secretary-General will be in a much better position ultimately to monitor and evaluate the performance of UNICs as well as advise Governments on the practicalities that must attend the location of new centres. The Secretary-General will, of course, as is the custom, continue to report to the Committee on Information on the work and activities of the centres.

#### E. Conclusion and recommendation

41. The Inspector believes that the Department of Public Information has made serious efforts to carry out its mandate and to disseminate information on the United Nations through UNICs as widely as possible. However that may be, while some 153 countries are nominally being served with United Nations information through the agency of UNICs, a significant proportion of these countries is not receiving a regular and solid service from UNICs nor enjoying in any consistent fashion the close contacts that individuals and institutions of those countries must have with the staff of a UNIC if a UNIC's services are to be tailored to needs. The arrangement therefore whereby a centre has had to take on responsibilities for coverage in countries other than the host country has, generally speaking, not been particularly effective as an organizational expedient.

42. Any success the expedient may have had has been impeded not only by shortcomings in communications (in the broadest sense) but also by a scarcity of financial resources for many vital services. The time does not therefore appear opportune to open new centres unless a proper review of the relevant conditions and of resources available is made prior to a decision and unless such a review confirms that opening a new centre is a viable proposition. Section C of this chapter sets out the factors which should be weighed in making an assessment of whether a new centre should be established or not. Section D sets out certain criteria which should be met before it is agreed that a new centre come into being.

43. The Inspector accordingly recommends the adoption by the General Assembly of the proposals put forward and the criteria set out in sections C and D of this chapter.

#### Notes

1/ General Assembly resolution 13 (1) of 13 February 1946.

2/ Official Records of the Second Session of the General Assembly, Supplement No. 1 (A/315), p. 64.

3/ General Assembly resolution 595 (VI) of 4 February 1952.

4/ General Assembly resolution 38/82 of 15 December 1983, annex, para. 33.

5/ A/33/146, para. 3.

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