



GENERAL ASSEMBLY

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Fourth session

ORGANIZATION OF A UNITED NATIONS POSTAL ADMINISTRATION

Report of the Secretary-General

1. In resolution 232 (III), adopted on 8 October 1949, the General Assembly:

- (i) Took note of the report of the Secretary-General on the question of a United Nations postal administration (A/655) and of the report thereon of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/663);
- (ii) Approved in principle the idea of establishing a United Nations postal administration;
- (iii) Invited the assistance of the Universal Postal Union in attaining this objective;
- (iv) Authorized the Secretary-General to conclude arrangements with various Governments, beginning with the Governments of those countries in which the main United Nations offices are situated for the issue of special or overprinted postage stamps, subject to the provision that:
 - (a) Words, designs, and face values of such issues shall be approved by the Secretary-General;
 - (b) No arrangements entered into under this paragraph shall involve financial loss to the United Nations;
- (v) Requested the Secretary-General to pursue the enquiries and negotiations which he had already initiated and to present a report to the next regular session of the General Assembly.

2. In pursuance of the instructions contained in paragraph (v) above, the Secretary-General has consulted further with the competent organs of the Universal Postal Union and with the United States postal authorities. He has also sought the assistance and advice of an internationally recognized expert on postal questions, Mr. W.R. Van Goor, former Chief Director of the Netherlands Postal Service whose report is attached as Annex 2. In order, that the General Assembly may be in possession of all necessary information in reaching a decision on

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this question and in instructing the Secretary-General accordingly, the following additional facts and observations are presented for its consideration.

3. The operation of a United Nations postal administration requires special relations with the Universal Postal Union. Immediately following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 232 (III) inviting the assistance of the Universal Postal Union in attaining the objective of establishing a United Nations postal administration, the matter was brought officially by the Secretary-General to the attention of the Executive and Liaison Committee of the Universal Postal Union which at a meeting in Locarno in October 1948 unanimously adopted the following resolution:

"The Secretary-General of the United Nations, having formally brought to the notice of the Universal Postal Union the resolution adopted at the third session of the General Assembly of the United Nations in Paris, which approved in principle the idea of creating a postal administration of the United Nations and having asked for that purpose the assistance of the Universal Postal Union, the Executive and Liaison Committee have expressed the following opinion:

"1) The United Nations Organization can, without being a member of the Universal Postal Union, set up a separate postal administration adhering to the Universal Postal Union and represented, from the postal point of view, by the United States of America.

"2) The United States of America will notify at the appropriate time the establishment of this Administration to all the Administrations of the Universal Postal Union through the International Bureau.

"3) The Postal Administration of the United Nations will be expected to observe the provisions of the Convention and its Regulations in its postal activities."

During the debate on this resolution, the representative of the United States of America declared that his Government was prepared to represent the new United Nations postal administration at the Universal Postal Union but that the responsibility for the operation of a United Nations postal administration, particularly in financial matters, must always be that of the United Nations. He also stated that

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questions of detail as to the operation of a United Nations postal administration could be discussed between the United Nations and the appropriate United States authorities.

4. Attention is called to the fact that the resolution adopted by the Executive and Liaison Committee of the Universal Postal Union presupposes a United Nations postal administration at the permanent Headquarters only. In view of the complications which would necessarily arise if United Nations postage stamps were to be issued and used in different currencies in a number of different countries where United Nations regional offices and specialized agencies are located, the Secretary-General agrees that the activities of a United Nations postal administration, should the General Assembly decide to proceed with its establishment, would best be limited, at least at the outset, to headquarters in the United States. This opinion is shared by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions which recommended, in its fourth report of 1948 (A/663) that "if any arrangements are adopted, they should be limited in the first instance to the headquarters of the Organization. Any extension of the arrangements, such as the issue of a postage stamp common to the United Nations and the specialized agencies should be deferred for later consideration."

5. A United Nations postal administration, if established, would in general be required to function in the same manner as any national postal administration. It would have to issue, use and sell its own postage stamps and to maintain its own post office in Headquarters buildings for the performance of normal postal services. As regards the official mail, all mail originating in the Headquarters buildings would need to be processed by the United Nations postal administration and handed over in bags to the United States postal authorities for further transmission. Similarly, the United Nations post office would receive from the United States postal authorities, for distribution to addresses, all mail destined to the United Nations at Permanent Headquarters. As the United Nations will not be in a position to provide facilities for transporting and delivering mails outside the Headquarters buildings, it will necessarily be dependent on the United States Post Office for these services. For this purpose, a special agreement would have to be negotiated covering on the one hand, the nature of the postal activities to be performed by the United Nations and, on the other, those operations which would have to be performed by the United States Post Office. The
/possibility

possibility of such an agreement becoming necessary is, in fact, foreseen in the Headquarters Agreement, section VI of which states: "In the event that the United Nations should propose to organize its own postal service, the conditions under which such service shall be set up shall be the subject of a supplemental agreement."

6. For the operation of its own postal service, the United Nations would need to arrange for the design, printing and issue of its own postage stamps. To meet all requirements, there would need to be a number of stamps of different denominations covering airmail as well as ordinary issues. Designs, however, could be limited in number, each design being used for several denominations. In the event of its being decided to proceed with the organization of a United Nations postal service, the General Assembly may also wish to consider the desirability of authorizing the Secretary-General to arrange for an international competition for United Nations stamp designs.

7. If the General Assembly should decide to establish a United Nations postal administration, a minimum of twelve months would be required for preparatory work, including the negotiating and concluding of an agreement with the United States authorities, the drafting of United Nations postal regulations, the preparation and the printing of the necessary postal forms, of postal guides and of a manual of instructions for the postal personnel. Before United Nations postage stamps could be made available, designs would have to be selected, possibly involving an international competition, and arrangements made for engraving of plates and printing. The Secretariat would require some expert assistance in setting up the new organization and preparing for its operation. It is estimated that a sum of \$10,000 would be required for this latter purpose but this has not been included in the financial calculations as it will not affect the recurring annual costs.

8. The estimated cost of present postal services, as provided in the 1950 Budget estimates amounts to a total of \$241,480 (staff costs \$73,480 and postage expenditures \$168,000). It is estimated that expenses of a United Nations postal administration will aggregate \$280,480 (staff costs \$123,480; transit costs \$112,000; cost of mail at present handled through branch U.S. Post Office \$25,000; printing of stamps \$10,000; equipment \$10,000). Against this total, however, there should be offset an anticipated \$60,000 revenue from sales of postage stamps for all unofficial purposes originating in the United Nations Post Office, thus reducing the total estimated net cost to \$220,480. The following additional considerations need also to be borne in mind:

/(i) The opinion

- (i) The opinion expressed by Mr. Van Goor in his report (Annex 2) that insufficient provision has been made in the above estimate for staff costs and that a separate postal service will require four additional personnel at an approximate cost of \$14,000 per annum.
- (ii) An additional \$20,000 will be required in the first year to cover expert assistance in setting up the new organization (\$10,000) and financing an international competition for stamp designs (\$10,000).
- (iii) Transport charges for air cargo and diplomatic pouch services would remain unchanged under a United Nations postal administration and budget provision would, therefore, still have to be made for these expenses. Staff costs for these services, however, are included in the above estimates relating both to present and proposed postal services.
- (iv) The above cost figures have been computed quite apart from possible expenditure and revenue involved in philatelic operations since it is impossible at this time to estimate with any degree of accuracy what such expenditure or revenue might be. Whilst it is probable that any philatelic operation would prove a net asset and might considerably reduce the cost of a United Nations postal service, attention is called in this connection, to the limited facilities which would be available to the United Nations for stimulating philatelic sales.

A detailed analysis of the above cost estimates is given in Annex 1.

9. The Advisory Committee, in its report to the third session of the General Assembly on the organization of a United Nations Postal administration (A/663), noted that inquiries had hitherto been largely confined to the administrative, technical and financial implications of the proposal and suggested that regard should also be had for the advantages in terms of publicity and propaganda likely to result from the issue of special United Nations postage stamps. With this consideration in mind, the Secretary-General was authorized to conclude arrangements, notably with the Governments of those countries in which the main United Nations offices are situated, for the issue of special or over-printed stamps.

10. This matter was raised by the Secretary-General with the Governments of the United States of America and of Switzerland. Agreement has been reached with the Swiss authorities for the issue of over-printed Swiss

postage stamps for use for all official mail dispatched from the European Office. The Swiss authorities are also prepared to consider a stamp issue with special United Nations design when opportune. Information concerning the position of the United States authorities has not yet been received by the Secretary-General.

ANNEX 1

Estimated cost of a United Nations Postal Administration

The figures set forth below indicate the estimated cost of United Nations postal services as operated under the present system, and the estimated cost of a United Nations postal administration. These cost estimates are based on the studies that were made in the preparation of the report of the Secretary-General to the third session of the General Assembly (A/655), but they have been modified in certain instances in the light of further study and experience.

A. Cost of Present Postal Services1. Staff costs

\$ U.S.

These costs are based on the number of staff as provided in the 1950 Budget Estimates for these activities and are costed on gross salaries at the appropriate grade and step and include pertinent allowances

73,480

2. Postage expenditures

This figure is based on the anticipated expenditure in connection with the postage of all United Nations official correspondence during 1950 as included in the Budget Estimates for that year

168,000

Total estimated cost of present service is therefore

241,480B. Estimated cost of the United Nations postal administration1. Staff costs

\$ U.S.

(a) Present staff (see A above)

73,480

(b) Additional staff

50,000

It is estimated that twelve additional posts would be required to operate a postal administration in view of the following additional functions:

(a) The maintenance of a small post office similar to the branch U. S. Post Office at Lake Success.

(b) The maintenance of detailed financial records, covering the issues and receipts of stamp sales as well as the assessment of transit charges.

/(c) The cancellation

(c) The cancellation and affixing of stamps		\$ U.S.
the sorting of bag mail by countries and the delivery of mail to the U. S. Post Office.		
2.	<u>Transit costs</u>	
	(1) All United Nations official mail	112,000
This is the amount calculated in 1948 by U. S. Post Office Department.		
	(2) Mail at present handled by branch U. S. Post Office which would be handled by the United Nations Post Office	25,000
3.	<u>Cost of printing postage stamps</u>	10,000
This estimate is based on the assumption that eleven denominations would be used for regular mail, two for special delivery mail, and five for air mail, and covers one year's supply of stamps. The minimum quantity printed in the first issue should be sufficient to cover two years postal expenditure, at a face value of \$500,000. The estimated sum of \$10,000 does <u>not</u> include the cost of printing of stamps for philatelic purposes.		
4.	<u>Miscellaneous costs</u>	
	(1) <u>Postal equipment</u>	10,000
This figure includes the cost of such items as scales, metering, stamp vending, typing and cancelling machines, postal sacks and sack racks.		
		<hr/> 280,480
5.	<u>Revenue from sales</u>	60,000
The sale of postage stamps for all unofficial mail in the United Nations Post Office would be revenue and as such could justly be credited to the budget of the postal administration to defray some of the costs subject to the necessary change in the United Nations financial regulations. This figure is estimated at \$60,000 a year based on the experience of the branch U. S. Post Office in operation at Lake Success.		
Therefore the total cost is estimated at		<hr/> \$220,480

ANNEX 2

REPORT BY MR. W. R. VAN GOOR ON THE QUESTION OF THE ESTABLISHING
OF A UNITED NATIONS POSTAL ADMINISTRATION

Before stating my opinion on this subject, as requested, I cannot fail to express my appreciation of the confidence which you have shown in me by extending this invitation. Furthermore I wish to express my gratitude for the cordiality with which I have been received, the facilities extended to me and the assistance and information given me by all those with whom I have been associated in my duties. This has made my task much easier and more agreeable.

To proceed to the subject, I feel that I should point out that neither the study of the documents concerned, nor the discussions that have taken place, have shown that the present arrangement (that is the handling of United Nations mail by the American Postal Service) is unsatisfactory or has given rise to criticism or complaints. On the contrary, as those concerned have often remarked, the United States postal authorities have extended every possible co-operation. There is no reason to assume that there will be any change in this co-operative attitude in the future.

Why then is it desired that the United Nations should have a postal service of its own?

If I understand the matter correctly, the purpose is, better to emphasize the special position of the United Nations in the world community by having its own postal service and more particularly by enabling it to issue its own postage stamps. This would bring the work of the United Nations closer to the public. In addition the United Nations hopes to come to a closer relationship, or rather hopes to be on an equal footing with the various postal administrations, members of the Universal Postal Union.

It is clear that the United Nations is doing everything possible to further general knowledge and interest in its aims and efforts. In this connexion we might mention the inscription connected with the United Nations Appeal for Children, which appears in the flag of the stamp, that is placed on a large amount of United Nations' outgoing mail.

It cannot be denied that a postage stamp of its own would afford the United Nations an important means of publicity. However, there is in my opinion an undesirable and unattractive aspect to the issuing of such a stamp. As the situation now appears, it can be assumed that a United Nations postage stamp would create great interest in philatelic circles at the outset and thus would provide the means for special revenue. On the other hand it should be observed, that it is doubtful whether this interest would continue. It is generally known that the issuing of new
/stamps,

stamps, not primarily motivated by actual postal needs, has grown to such an extent, that not only in philatelic circles but also elsewhere (without mentioning the postage stamp trade) it meets with little appreciation and interest, if not with actual disapproval. Thus I might respectfully inquire whether it would be in keeping with the standing of the United Nations to enter into an activity of this nature, risking comparison with certain countries which issue postage stamps primarily for revenue purposes.

With regard to the handling of the mail, a clear distinction must be made between two different aspects. First, all of the United Nations outgoing mail and documents must be prepared for dispatch, that is addressed, placed in envelopes and stamped, either with stamps or by the use of a metering machine. This is a purely internal service, with which the American postal administration is not concerned and which therefore need not be taken into consideration.

Secondly there is the subsequent handling and dispatch of the mail as already observed. This is carried out as far as possible with the co-operation of the American postal administration, using the means of transport which it has available.

Furthermore the postal administration maintains a post office in the building at Lake Success for the convenience of those in the building.

All this represents no special cost to the United Nations.

What will the situation be if it is decided to provide the United Nations with a postal service of its own?

The relationship between the American postal service and the United Nations postal service will then be like that between the American postal service and for example the Canadian postal service; that is the relationship between two independent administrations.

Correspondence, mailed in a United Nations mail box, destined for the United States, would be subject to international postage rates and vice versa. The United Nations postal service would handle United Nations mail entirely independently, in agreement with the postal administrations of the countries concerned, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Universal Postal Union. Any joint dispatch of mail by the United Nations and the American postal service with the use of the knowledge and experience of the latter, which naturally overcomes many difficulties, would be out of the question.

The post office mentioned above would have to be staffed by United Nations personnel. Obviously this would necessitate the employment of additional personnel.

/With reference

With reference to the figures given in this connexion in the report under consideration, I should like to make the following observation: In that report it is assumed that an increase of 12 in the personnel would suffice. In my opinion this figure is too low. Although the volume of mail to be handled is not large, the fact must be taken into account that the mail is destined for almost all parts of the world, which in view of the administrative difficulties and details involved, makes the task considerably more complex. I feel that the provision would have to be made for the employment of four additional personnel at an approximate cost of \$14,000 per annum.

It should be pointed out that any special arrangements made with the American postal administration would have to be taken into consideration; this matter would be discussed subsequently. I presume that provision for such an arrangement may have already been made; in my opinion it would be useful.

It is assumed that United Nations stamps will be sold to philatelists only if they apply at the United Nations stamp window. If a service should be instituted for the sale of United Nations stamps by mail order, then it seems to me that a staff of approximately 10 persons would be required, especially at the outset; it is difficult to foresee how long and in what quantity these demands would continue. Naturally the increase in the income derived from the sale of stamps could be applied against the increased outlay for personnel.

As mentioned earlier it should be emphasized that it is the desire of the United Nations to establish a closer relationship with the members of the Universal Postal Union. As is known, it is impossible for the United Nations to enter the Universal Postal Union under the provisions of the Paris Convention of 1947. We cannot foresee what changes will be made in the convention at the Brussels Congress in 1952.

For the present I cannot be optimistic on this matter in view of the conversations on this subject that have taken place in Paris and in the Executive and Liaison Committee, apart from the question whether it would be appropriate for the United Nations, which is the co-ordinating body for the specialized agencies, to be at the same time a member of one of these agencies, the Universal Postal Union.

Article II, paragraph 1, of the "Accord entre l'Organisation des Nations Unies et l'Union postale Universelle" provides that: "Les représentants de l'Organisation des Nations Unies seront invités à assister aux congrès, conférences administratives et commissions de l'Union, et à participer, sans droit de vote, aux délibérations de ces réunions." It appears to me that this should fully satisfy the above-mentioned desire on the part of the United Nations.

I was called upon to assist the Secretariat in preparing this question for discussions at the General Assembly.

As to whether it is possible to establish and operate a United Nations postal administration, my answer is in the affirmative. However, it is essential that I draw attention to the fact that the setting up and operating of a United Nations postal administration involves not only careful preparations but also a great deal of exacting administrative work.

Moreover, the question has another aspect, namely whether it is desirable to create a United Nations postal administration. In this connexion the following questions have occurred to me:

(a) Is it advisable, particularly in these times of co-operation and efficiency for the United Nations to develop its own postal service with all that such a step entails, for such a relatively small volume of mail, while the extremely competent machinery of the American postal service is immediately available?

(b) Is it really appropriate, is there really justification for the United Nations to play the role of a "mailman"? I fear that in the eyes of the general public, which is so fond of the well known saying "let the shoemaker stick to his last", an effect opposite to that desired may be produced: a poorer rather than a better understanding of the aims of the United Nations.

After careful consideration I can only give a negative reply to these questions; it is my opinion that there are not sufficient grounds to warrant the establishing of a United Nations postal service.

I have now accomplished the task given me by the United Nations. But I should like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation of the efficient operation of the Secretariat mail service. The manner in which they do their best not only to find out the quickest way of dispatching but also take into account whether the often high airmail rates are justified is of great use and benefit to the United Nations.

(Signed) VAN GOOR

Lake Success, 2 September 1949
