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INTERNATIONAL COVENANTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Publicity for the work of the Human Rights CommitteeReport of the Secretary-General

1. The Human Rights Committee first considered the question of publicity for its work at its eighth session, during which it was suggested by some members that the official records of the Committee be made available annually in bound volumes - one volume to contain the summary records of public meetings of the Committee, and a second volume to contain other public documents of the Committee, including reports of States parties under article 40 of the Covenant.
2. At its tenth session, after consultations with the appropriate services of the Secretariat, the Human Rights Committee returned again to this suggestion and decided to request the Secretariat to arrange for the official records of the Committee to be made available in the proposed form. 1/
3. In pursuance of this request, the Committee, at its eleventh session, was informed of the approximate cost, as estimated by the competent services in the Secretariat, of the annual publication of two bound volumes, in the four working languages, one incorporating the summary records of the meetings of the Committee and the other incorporating the reports submitted by States parties under article 40 of the Covenant, and other relevant documents of the Committee.
4. At its thirteenth session, the Committee was informed by the Director of the Division of Human Rights of the estimated cost of publication of the bound volumes on a commercial basis. At the same time, it was advised that the United Nations Publications Board had indicated to the Division that it would not be willing to see funds committed for this purpose in the absence of a formal decision by the Committee, endorsed by the General Assembly, to the effect that the Secretary-General should be requested to take the necessary steps to ensure the publication of the Committee's documentation. The Committee decided so to request the Secretary-General. 2/

5. At its thirty-sixth session, the General Assembly, in paragraph 13 of its resolution 36/58, welcomed the measures taken by the Secretary-General to improve the publicity of the work of the Human Rights Committee and requested the Secretary-General to consider the most appropriate steps for the publication of the Committee's documentation and to report on this question to the Assembly at its thirty-seventh session. The present report, prepared pursuant to this request, analyses the different possibilities of meeting the Committee's wishes.

6. Acting upon the request of the Human Rights Committee at its tenth session, the competent services of the Secretariat established that:

(a) The average number of mimeographed pages of summary records covering the annual three sessions of the Committee runs to approximately 500;

(b) The average number of mimeographed pages of other documents, including reports submitted by States parties, runs to approximately 800;

(c) In preparing such estimates note should be taken of the fact that the annual number of copies of such publications would be approximately 2,000 in English, 1,000 in French, 200 in Russian and 500 in Spanish.

7. Since the Committee first issued documentation in 1977, there would also be a backlog of five years. For this, however, the average number of pages is significantly lower than the figure indicated in paragraph 6: only 1979 documentation would require the two volumes of, respectively, 500 and 800 pages, while 1977-1978 and 1980-1981 documentation could be combined. The backlog would therefore add up to a total of three volumes of summary records and three volumes of other documents.

8. Among the possible methods of producing this documentation was external publishing by a commercial publisher under his own imprint. Accordingly, a number of private firms were approached by the competent services of the Secretariat to determine whether they were interested in the project and on what terms.

9. Two commercial publishers expressed an interest in publishing a series of annual volumes. One publisher offered publication in English only, but the other was prepared to issue the volumes in English and in French, provided, in both cases, the United Nations made commitments in advance to purchase each year at least 200 sets of the English edition and 100 sets of the French edition. The first volume published would cover the Committee's work in 1980. Volumes covering 1977/1978 and 1979 would be added later so that the annual record would be complete from the first year of the Committee's work.

10. The proposed arrangement was then presented to the United Nations Publications Board for its opinion. The Board was unwilling to have funds committed in advance without the prior approval of the General Assembly and the appropriation of the necessary funds. It also found problematic the proposed assured purchase provision. In addition, the problem of the publication of the Russian and Spanish versions of the documents would remain. The board therefore requested that the cost implications of both internal and external reproduction of the Committee's documentation and its issuance by the United Nations itself be determined.

11. Since it was found that the internal printing capacity of the United Nations Office at Geneva was being fully utilized for other essential purposes and would continue to be for the foreseeable future, it was decided to explore the best possible prospects for the external printing of the material.

12. Taking the basic annual figures given in paragraph 6 (500 pages for volume I and 800 pages for volume II), the following is the best offer received for the external printing of the Committee's annual documentation, starting with 1982.

Language	Number of printed pages	Number of copies	Cost <u>a/</u> (in United States dollars)	
<u>Volume I</u>				
English	200	2,000	16,470	
French	220	1,000	16,305	
Russian	230	200	7,366	
Spanish	220	500	<u>16,305</u>	<u>56,446</u>
<u>Volume II</u>				
English	320	2,000	26,352	
French	352	1,000	26,088	
Russian	368	200	11,785	
Spanish	352	500	<u>26,088</u>	<u>90,313</u>
GRAND TOTAL				<u>146,759</u>

a/ Calculated at an exchange rate of Sw.Fr. 2.12.

13. These estimates, based on a maximum theoretical number of 1,300 mimeographed pages, will, of course, be subject to revision in the light of the actual final count. Also should an order for the backlog period 1977-1981 be placed simultaneously, the firm will undoubtedly agree to a reduction of the total charges, currently estimated to cost some \$440,000.

14. The task of editing and preparing copies for submission to the printers could be undertaken with the present resources of the Secretariat and would therefore entail no additional expense.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 40 (A/35/40), paras. 15 and 19.

2/ Ibid., Thirty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 40 (A/36/40), paras. 19-27.
