



# Economic and Social Council

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## Committee for Programme and Coordination

Sixty-fourth session

New York, 13 May–14 June 2024

### Draft report

*Rapporteur:* Mr. Noel M. Novicio (Philippines)

#### Addendum

### Programme questions: proposed programme budget for 2025

(Item 3 (a))

#### Programme 1

#### General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management

1. At its 16th meeting, on 24 May 2024, the Committee considered programme 1, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management, of the proposed programme plan for 2025 and programme performance in 2023 ([A/79/6 \(Sect. 2\)](#)).

#### Discussion

2. Delegations expressed their appreciation and support for the crucial work of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, which continued to successfully carry out the tasks entrusted to it to ensure the sustainable functioning of the United Nations. Gratitude was expressed to the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management and his whole team for their efforts to make the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and all subsidiary organs and subcommittees, including the Committee for Programme and Coordination, work. It was mentioned that the Department provided essential facilitation for all political processes, assistance in the revitalization efforts of the Assembly and other United Nations bodies, substantive and technical secretariat support to the Committee on Conferences and high-quality conference servicing support, including multilingual meeting and documentation services, to all intergovernmental and expert bodies meeting at Headquarters and at the United Nations Offices at Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi, as well as protocol services for the



United Nations leadership. The Department's vital role in servicing the needs of Member States and facilitating the technological and logistical foundations for the intergovernmental processes across the United Nations system was noted, and its actions to strengthen and increase inclusion and collaboration within the Organization were commended. It was noted that, as the department with the largest number of staff, it utilized its resources effectively to provide high-quality conference and documentation services, even in a severe liquidity crisis. The hard work of all language staff was appreciated. A delegation said that it counted on the Department to continue to provide high-quality translation and interpretation services to Member States and to strive to provide even better quality translation and interpretation services. Support was expressed for the Department's strategy for 2025 to continue to centrally coordinate evaluation activities and risk management, including business continuity within existing mandates, and provide high-quality and reliable data to facilitate informed managerial decision-making and performance monitoring.

3. A delegation commented that the Department's programme plan was very well drafted, and said that, despite the length of the report, which was understandable given the size of the Department, the report was easy to navigate and very objective. Regarding the timely submission of documents, appreciation was conveyed as all documents had been submitted before the start of the Committee's session, with the Department congratulated for that achievement. Appreciation was also expressed for accommodating the request for a bigger conference room for the Committee to facilitate negotiations.

4. On multilingualism, one of the fundamental and core values of the United Nations, the efforts of the Under-Secretary-General to coordinate its implementation within the Secretariat, as well as to promote such efforts across the United Nations system, were acknowledged and appreciated. A delegation said that it had consistently advocated the strengthening of the principle of multilingualism and always paid special attention to the need to maintain parity between the six official languages of the Organization. Another delegation, whose language was one of the official languages, said that the language had played a key role at the United Nations, promoting understanding and cooperation among nations. The same delegation said that its language and culture emphasized harmony between humanity and nature, valued innovation and flexibility, and contributed valuable wisdom to the work of the United Nations, making important contributions to global cultural heritage. The Department was commended for its efforts to promote the equal use of the official languages.

5. Expressing support for the proposed programme plan for 2025, a delegation welcomed the strategy of continuous modernization and improvement in all areas, including the active use of technology and innovation to further optimize the provision of timely, cost-effective and sustainable conference services. The use of innovative practices, including digital technologies and artificial intelligence, to facilitate meetings and conferences was commended, and the Department was encouraged to further those efforts and adapt delivery in response to the proliferation of new technologies and modern working practices. The Department was also encouraged to continue to implement strategic priorities in areas such as the digital transformation of United Nations conference services, to use technologies to create and support data assets and digital commons as a global public good, and to boost partnerships and maintain business readiness through focused risk management. The emphasis on minimizing the environmental impact of the services provided by the Department, and the efforts undertaken in that regard, were appreciated. Delegations requested additional information regarding the use of digital technologies and innovative solutions to address future shocks and ensure the business continuity of

the United Nations, given the lessons learned from the challenges arising from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the liquidity crisis.

6. A delegation expressed its strong support for the Department's commitment, as noted in paragraph 2.63, to maintaining the availability of conferencing tools and solutions to the benefit of organizers should a business continuity requirement arise. It was stated that virtual and hybrid participation had delivered clear benefits for the work of the United Nations, particularly by increasing the inclusion of small delegations, especially small island developing States and least developed countries, as well as civil society and other stakeholders, by reducing the barriers to participation in both formal and informal meetings.

7. In that regard, noting recent renewed discussion on a return to remote meetings, for example Human Rights Council decision [55/116](#) on remote participation modalities for hybrid meetings of the Council, a delegation indicated that, in accordance with General Assembly resolution [77/262](#), adopted on the recommendation of the Fifth Committee, the Secretariat was required to have a separate mandate to hold intergovernmental meetings in a virtual or hybrid format. As such a mandate had never been given by Member States, the delegation was pleased to note that, on that issue, the Department continued to act in strict accordance with Member States' decisions. Noting that the holding of meetings remotely had been a temporary measure when COVID-19 constraints had prevented face-to-face meetings and that the World Health Organization had declared an end to COVID-19 as a global public health emergency, thus ending the business continuity measure in the Secretariat, the delegation was of the view that those ideas had long since lost their relevance.

8. A delegation took note of the holistic approach of the Department to recruitment and succession planning efforts, including its assessment of changing technological developments, and expressed the view that such efforts would make a solid contribution to effective service delivery and mitigation of risks to business continuity, both at Headquarters and at the United Nations Offices at Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi.

9. Regarding the outreach programmes to universities, additional information was sought on the status of those programmes given the liquidity situation. Delegations asked how the universities were chosen and whether the programmes had been successful in attracting more staff, especially taking into account retirements and the rejuvenation of United Nations staff.

10. On enabling the harmonization of legal terminology across duty stations, the Department was commended for the upgrade of the UNTERM portal and the creation and updating of 1,984 legal records in UNTERM during the year.

11. Expressing strong appreciation for the important work of the Department, delegations conveyed their support for the programme plan for programme 1 for 2025, including the Department's strategy of continuous modernization and improvement in all areas in order to provide high-quality and timely conference services as efficiently and cost-effectively as possible, optimize the utilization of internal and external language capacities and increase the efficiency of its services through the deployment of modern technologies. Delegations asked what guidance or help would be needed from the Committee in order for the Department to carry out its work in 2025.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

12. **The Committee noted with appreciation the efforts of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management in managing and supporting**

**United Nations conferences, meetings and deliberations to enable the effective implementation of United Nations mandates, programmes and operations.**

**13. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly approve the programme narrative of programme 1, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management, of the proposed programme budget for 2025.**

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