



UNITED NATIONS  
GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY



Distr.  
GENERAL

A/34/379/Add.1  
14 September 1979

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

---

Thirty-fourth session  
Items 53 and 102 of the provisional agenda\*

QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION

JOINT INSPECTION UNIT

Report on the United Nations information centres

Comments by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly his comments on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the United Nations information centres (JIU/REP/79/10).

---

\* A/34/150.

CONTENTS

	<u>Paragraphs</u>	<u>Page</u>
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1 - 9	4
II. COMMENTARY ON MAIN SUBJECTS . . . . .	10 - 108	7
A. Administrative and budgetary matters . . . . .	15 - 24	8
1. Budgets of United Nations information centres . . . . .	15 - 18	8
2. Information Centres Service . . . . .	19 - 20	9
3. Rent-free premises . . . . .	21 - 24	9
B. Personnel matters . . . . .	25 - 34	10
1. Geographical distribution . . . . .	25 - 29	10
2. Qualifications of Professional Staff . . . . .	30 - 32	11
3. General Service staff of United Nations Information Centres . . . . .	33 - 34	12
C. Operations of information centres . . . . .	35 - 86	12
1. Communications . . . . .	35	12
2. Distribution of material . . . . .	36 - 40	12
3. Local-language material . . . . .	41	13
4. Development information . . . . .	42	14
5. Reference libraries . . . . .	43 - 46	14
6. Audio-visual material . . . . .	47 - 56	15
7. Reporting to Headquarters . . . . .	57 - 59	17
8. Teaching about the United Nations . . . . .	60 - 64	17
9. Relations with United Nations associations and other non-governmental organizations . . . . .	65 - 70	19
10. Relations with the United Nations Development Programme . . . . .	71 - 73	20
11. Relations with specialized agencies . . . . .	74	20
12. United Nations information centres in developed countries . . . . .	75 - 78	21
13. United Nations Information Service at Geneva . . . . .	79 - 86	22
D. Organizational structure and management . . . . .	87	24
1. Structural changes . . . . .	89 - 98	24
2. Hiring of correspondents . . . . .	99 - 100	27
3. Role of the Field Operations Division . . . . .	101 - 105	27
4. Conclusion . . . . .	106 - 108	28
III. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS . . . . .	109	30

CONTENTS (continued)

ANNEXES

- I. UNITED NATIONS INFORMATION CENTRES AND OFFICES
- II. UNITED NATIONS INFORMATION CENTRES WITH TELEX NUMBERS
- III. INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM DATED 3 OCTOBER 1978 FROM THE UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR PUBLIC INFORMATION, MR. G. AKATANI, ADDRESSED TO THE DIRECTORS OF UNITED NATIONS INFORMATION CENTRES AND SERVICES, CONCERNING THE CENTRES' RELATIONS WITH NATIONAL UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATIONS

## I. INTRODUCTION

1. In June 1979, the Joint Inspection Unit issued its "Report on the United Nations information centres" (JIU/REP/79/10), prepared by Mr. I. N. K. Atiase, Mr. N. Forde, Mr. S. Ilic and Mr. Z. Sibahi. The findings of the Inspectors were based on visits to 28 United Nations information centres in all major regions of the world and on replies to detailed questionnaires received from 42 centres.
2. The Secretary-General notes with appreciation that the Inspectors have undertaken a detailed examination of a significant number of United Nations information centres. Within a relatively limited period of time, they completed a first-hand investigation of the working conditions, effectiveness of functioning and quality of personnel at four information centres in Western Europe, two in Eastern Europe, two in the Middle East, 11 in Africa, three in Asia and the Pacific and six in Latin America and the Caribbean. They interviewed government officials, non-governmental and media representatives, as well as staff members of the Department of Public Information at Headquarters and in the field. Their findings therefore shed much useful light on the important role played by the system of information centres in the United Nations over-all public information programme, and their recommendations deserve serious and thoughtful consideration by all concerned.
3. Many of the findings in the report serve to corroborate the existence of problems and inadequacies confronting the system of information centres which were described in 1976 by the Secretary-General in his report on this subject to the General Assembly at its thirty-first session (A/C.5/31/14). Also, in a number of respects, the contents of the report parallels the conclusions and recommendations made by the Administrative Management Service in 1970 and 1971 and approved by the Secretary-General concerning the role of the then Office of Public Information at Headquarters with respect to the information centres as well as management and manpower utilization in the field establishment of that office.
4. Among the matters on which the Joint Inspection Unit and the Secretary-General seem to have come to essentially the same conclusions, mention might be made of the following:
  - (a) The need for highly qualified Professional public information staff;
  - (b) The key role of information assistants and the desirability of placing them in a local Professional category similar to the practice of UNICEF;
  - (c) The need for qualified reference assistants/librarians and for suitable training for such staff in the maintenance of United Nations documentation;
  - (d) The need for information centres to take a more active role in the local production of information materials (press, publications, radio and/or television);

(e) The desirability of closer relations between information centres and educational institutions as well as non-governmental organizations, where this is feasible locally;

(f) The need for staff at Headquarters to pay closer attention to the regionalization of the material which it sends to information centres and to target its output more specifically to the expressed needs of information centres;

(g) The need for more adequate premises for information centres and for provision of rent-free premises and/or a contribution towards such premises by Governments of the host countries;

(h) The need for more travel funds for staff of information centres;

(i) The need for an improvement in the equipment provided to information centres and the inadequacy of the facilities now available.

5. The Secretary-General notes the fact that the Inspectors, in writing their report, have taken into account the comprehensive report on public information policies (A/33/146), which the Secretary-General submitted to the General Assembly at its thirty-third session, as well as the important action taken by the General Assembly when it adopted resolutions 33/115 A, B and C on "Questions relating to information".

6. The Committee to Review United Nations Public Information Policies and Activities, established by General Assembly resolution 33/115 C has set up an ad hoc working group, which has already begun an analysis and evaluation of the policies and activities of the Department of Public Information and of other information units in the Secretariat. The Secretary-General expects that the report which the Inspectors have prepared on United Nations information centres will prove useful to the Committee and to its ad hoc working group. In the Secretariat, the Department of Public Information is engaged in serious study of the report with a view to assessing the extent to which the recommendations contained therein can be implemented. While some of these recommendations can be carried out immediately, others may be implemented gradually over a three- to four-year period.

7. The Secretary-General's comments on the comprehensive findings and detailed recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit are made in the two chapters which follow. The first consists of commentary on the major subjects covered in the main body of the report. This is done under four subheadings: administrative and budgetary matters, personnel matters, operations of the information centres and organizational structure and management. Chapter II contains comments on each of the 37 recommendations of the Inspectors, with references, as appropriate, to the relevant paragraphs of chapter I.

8. While the subject of the report is of concern primarily to the Department of Public Information, the Secretary-General, in preparing his comments, has also consulted the heads of other offices concerned, namely, the United Nations Office at Geneva, the Office of Financial Services, the Office of Personnel

Services, the Office of General Services, the Internal Audit Division and the Administrative Management Service.

9. A current listing of United Nations information centres, showing when each was established and what countries are served, and certain other documentation referred to in the text are appended (see annexes I to III).

## II. COMMENTARY ON MAIN SUBJECTS

10. The findings of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit reaffirm the importance of an effective network of United Nations information centres as an instrument for informing the peoples of the world about the Organization's aims and activities. The report furthermore makes clear that much still needs to be done to make the information centres system function more effectively as a whole and to improve the efficiency of individual centres.

11. Certain important improvements instituted in connexion with the Secretary-General's 1976 report on the information centres system (A/C.5/31/14) have placed increased emphasis on the professional qualifications of public information staff and have helped to establish better communication between the Directors of the centres and the Department of Public Information at Headquarters. At the same time, the Secretary-General is in full agreement on the continuing need for strengthening and improving the network of information centres if it is to function in a fully effective way and if the Organization is to receive an optimum return from the investment which it has made in the field establishment of the Department.

12. The typical United Nations information centre represents a microcosm of all the main functions of the Department of Public Information itself, extending services to its own locality or region in the field of press, publications, radio, television, films, graphics and exhibitions. It also provides an information service on the United Nations to educational, governmental and non-governmental organizations, including reference libraries open to students and the general public. Each centre is expected to be a prompt and ready source of up-to-date information on the aims and activities of the Organization as a whole, including the global issues and problems of concern to the Governments and peoples of the world. Its role should not be a passive one. It should make active efforts to establish and maintain a wide range of professional contacts, including a close working relationship with all information media and national information bodies in the region. Non-governmental organizations should be actively assisted and encouraged in their efforts in support of the United Nations. Ongoing liaison should be maintained with the Ministry of Education, teachers' organizations, schools and universities in programmes relating to teaching about the United Nations.

13. The functions and responsibilities of the information centres are therefore broad and wide-ranging. In this connexion, it should be borne in mind that, while certain needs and objectives are shared by all centres, each functions in a different national surrounding and must adapt its work programme and methods to local conditions and needs. Furthermore, the impact and effectiveness of the centre's activities depend to a large extent not only on the available operational resources, but also on the professional calibre and dedication of its staff.

14. It must be recognized that the size of a typical United Nations information centre is quite small in terms of its mandate and functions. Its staff consists usually of one Professional officer, assigned from Headquarters as Director of the centre, and approximately five local staff members comprising a local Professional information assistant, a reference assistant or librarian, sometimes an administrative assistant, secretarial and clerical staff and a combined mimeograph operator/driver/messenger.

A. Administrative and budgetary matters

1. Budgets of United Nations information centres

15. The report of the Joint Inspection Unit emphasizes that there is an urgent need to provide centres with essential operating and travel expenses "without which much of the impact of staff work will be lost" (A/34/379, para. 34). The Inspectors point out that centres at present have practically no funds for the translation and adaptation of information materials, and the provision for travel is so small that centre staff are virtually confined to the capital cities in which they are stationed.

16. The Secretary-General shares the Inspectors' concern over this situation, for without the provision of essential operating expenses, the Organization will not receive the maximum return from the investment of staff and premises in the information centres system. He therefore welcomes and fully agrees with the Inspectors' findings on the need to provide more adequate funds for communications, travel, translation and reproduction of information material, supplies and equipment. The Secretary-General recognizes that the proportion of the budget devoted to staff costs is too high in relation to operational expenses, and that the breakdown among main objects of expenditure of the budget for centres requires some adjustment. Furthermore, he supports the Inspectors' view that greater flexibility in the use of staff could be achieved with more adequate funds for temporary assistance.

17. The Secretary-General has some difficulty, however, in reconciling recommendations 1 and 3 with recommendation 2. The Inspectors, on the one hand, have recognized "the shortage of staff at many UNICs". It is obvious, on the other hand, that staff costs in the order of 85 per cent is far too high a proportion of centre budgets. To a great extent this condition has been imposed by the fact that many new information centres were established over the years at the request of the General Assembly without the appropriation of additional funds. Thus, each time a new centre was established, the available operational resources for all had to be divided into smaller portions. The situation is now so untenable that the Department of Public Information has been examining the possibility of closing a number of centres in order to operate the network more efficiently. However, as the Secretary-General pointed out in his 1976 report on information centres, this course of action is virtually precluded for political reasons.

18. The Inspectors have come to the conclusion that, while the existing budget levels of the Department of Public Information as a whole should not be increased, the share of the total budget of the Department devoted to information centres should be increased to at least 50 per cent. Since increasing the relative share of the budget for information centres in the circumstances envisaged would inevitably reduce the share for the Department at Headquarters, this would have serious implications for the Department, the consequences of which would have to be carefully studied. The Inspectors recognize that "even at DPI headquarters, funds are devoted to serving UNICs" (A/34/379, para. 23). If a fair share of the



cost to DPI headquarters of producing and transmitting all the information material provided to the centres were added to the proportion of the budget now being devoted to the centres, the result might well already equal or exceed 50 per cent. The Secretary-General understands and agrees with the Inspectors, however, on the basic need to strengthen the resources of the information centres system.

## 2. Information Centres Service

19. The Inspectors' findings seem to bear out the contention of programme managers of the United Nations information centres system that there is insufficient staff at Headquarters to serve the present number of centres as well as they should be served for optimum cost-benefit to the Organization. The inadequacy of background material and the slow reaction of the Department of Public Information at Headquarters to centres' requests, to which the Inspectors have referred, could well have been avoided with only a moderate increase of staff in the Information Centres Service.

20. In 1958, when there were less than half (26) of the present number of information centres, there were more than twice the number of staff at Headquarters to meet their needs. Twenty years later, with many more United Nations programmes and activities and almost twice as many Member States, staff members in the Information Centres Service at Headquarters find that their workload has not only multiplied, but has become much more complex. This might be considered to be an example of over-decentralization.

## 3. Rent-free premises

21. Of the total number of 60 centres, 48 of the Governments of host countries provide rent-free premises or financial subsidies to centres, and it is now the clear policy of the Department of Public Information not to establish a new centre unless the prospective Government of the host country agrees to do so.

22. The Inspectors have expressed their belief that their proposals for a revised structure and functions for information centres (which are the subject of more detailed comments below) could be introduced gradually without increasing the over-all budget of the Department of Public Information if Governments undertake to meet the cost of rental and maintenance of the premises of information centres in their country. Whether or not the Inspectors' belief will be correct, the Secretary-General cannot but support the idea that Governments of host countries should provide for the rental and maintenance of premises of centres in their countries. He is, moreover, in full agreement with the Inspectors on the importance of securing premises that are well located and sufficiently spacious to accommodate a reference library, reading room and storerooms.

23. Responding to comments of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and to statements in the Fifth Committee, the Secretary-General, on 28 May 1963, addressed notes verbales to 47 Member States requesting them "to give favourable consideration to the question of providing rent-free premises" for

United Nations information centres. Similar notes verbales, referring to the 1963 request, were sent on 20 April 1967 to 10 Member States which had not replied affirmatively to the earlier request and, on 9 January 1973, to nine Member States, eight of which had not replied affirmatively, and one from which additional assistance would be appreciated.

24. Notwithstanding his view that Governments of host countries should provide rent-free premises, the Secretary-General would see some difficulties with the implication in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (para. 179) that rent-paying centres should be eliminated, since several such centres are located in major capitals of the developed world, where there exists a special need for sustained United Nations public information activities, as has been repeatedly emphasized by the General Assembly.

## B. Personnel matters

### 1. Geographical distribution

25. The Inspectors have concluded from an examination of the geographical distribution of the staff that "the geographical composition of DPI staff is unbalanced and action is required urgently to redress the imbalance in favour of developing countries" (recommendation 4).

26. Without going into details on the figures used in the report, the Department of Public Information has made an analysis of all the Professional staff of the External Relations Division assigned to the information centres and those at Headquarters who are directly involved with the Information Centres Service, based on the staffing position of the Department as at 1 May 1979.

27. For the purpose of this analysis, use was made of the Secretary-General's report to the General Assembly at its thirty-third session on the composition of the Secretariat (A/33/176). Taking the 1978 figures, the desirable percentages of Professional staff in the Secretariat given in this report for each of four groups of Member States were as follows: Group A (developing countries in Asia and Africa), 28.4; Group B (countries with developed market economies), 49.6; Group C (developing countries in Latin America), 8.2; and Group D (socialist countries), 13.8. The total percentage considered desirable for staff from the developed countries (Groups B and D) was therefore 63.4 per cent, while the figure for the developing countries (Groups A and C) was 36.6 per cent.

28. The Department's analysis of Professional staff on their staffing table serving with the information centres system at Headquarters and abroad shows 15 in Group A, 17 in Group B, 10 in Group C and 10 in Group D. Calculated in the same way, the relative figures for staff in the four groups are 51.9 per cent from developed countries and 48.1 per cent from developing countries. Thus, as far as the Professional staff of the Department relevant to the report of the Joint Inspection Unit are concerned, approximately one half are from developing countries, a proportion well above the officially-established desirable range. If centre directors who are on the staffing tables of the regional commissions and UNIDO

had been included in this analysis, the results would not have been significantly different, since they are about equally divided between nationals of developing and developed countries.

29. The Inspectors' reference (in para. 37) to "40 Professionals at 14 UNICs in Europe and North America" is somewhat puzzling, since the staffing table of the Department shows only 18. It would not be fair to include the whole staff of the United Nations Information Service at Geneva in the figure for the information centres in view of Geneva's coverage and other functions, but, even if that were done, the figure would still fall short of 40. Professional staff from developing countries in the United Nations Information Service at Geneva now account for only one third of the total. The Secretary-General believes that, as posts at Geneva become available through transfer or retirement, a conscious effort should be made to increase the number of Professional staff from developing countries. Particular account must be taken, however, of language requirements and of the special requirements of the European region, notably those of the six countries for which the United Nations Information Service at Geneva is directly responsible.

## 2. Qualifications of Professional staff

30. The Secretary-General is in full agreement with the Inspectors' view that "information more than many of the other United Nations activities requires a high level of professional specialization and this in turn calls for professionally qualified leadership" (A/34/379, para. 53). He is pleased to note that the Inspectors have endorsed the desirable qualifications and actual responsibilities of directors of information centres outlined in his own report to the General Assembly in 1976 (A/C.5/31/14). The same criteria still hold true today.

31. While recognizing professional information background and knowledge of local conditions, including the languages used, as essential requirements, the Secretary-General considers that emphasis should also be placed on the necessity for centre directors to have extensive knowledge and experience of the United Nations as well as sound political judgement. Experience has shown that an effective combination has often been where the centre director is thoroughly familiar with the policies, structure and priorities of the United Nations, and the local information professional has a detailed knowledge of the country and its conditions, as well as excellent media and other professional contacts.

32. While noting that "United Nations practice has hitherto maintained that a national should not head a UNIC in his country", the Inspectors urged a reconsideration of this principle and recommended "that this restriction be removed". The Secretary-General notes that some exceptions to the principle of avoiding the appointment of centre directors who are nationals of the host country already exist, but there are valid reasons for keeping such exceptions to a minimum. A United Nations information centre should reflect the international character of the Organization. Most centre directors are accorded certain privileges and immunities which would be inappropriate to apply to a national of

the country. Having nationals as centre directors also makes more difficult the periodic rotation and reassignment of directors. It is relevant to note that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with a far larger field establishment than that of the Department of Public Information, observes the same principle in the appointment of its resident representatives and makes no exceptions.

### 3. General Service staff of United Nations information centres

33. The Secretary-General welcomes the Inspectors' strong support for greater recognition of the professional skills and qualifications of information assistants and reference assistants. Such a policy was enunciated in the Secretary-General's report to the General Assembly in 1976, but some difficulties have been experienced in implementing it in terms of the Organization's personnel procedures. However, the Secretary-General intends to pursue the possibility of designating qualified information assistants and reference assistants as local professionals along the lines recommended by the Inspectors.

34. With regard to career development, there are now some 10 individual cases of former information assistants who have been given international professional assignments, leading in some cases to the post of centre director, thereby providing a substantial foundation of successful precedents on which to build future action. Moreover, it should be noted that the first Career Development Committee to be established covers the information occupation. One reason for its being selected was the fact that there are a number of posts now in that occupation in the General Service category which are filled by experienced information and research specialists with limited career prospects. The Committee will review this problem as a part of its work in developing an integrated career system.

### C. Operations of the information centres

#### 1. Communications

35. The Inspectors have rightly recommended that fast and reliable communication is a basic requirement of public information. They have cited telex facilities as a necessary and important piece of equipment and have recommended that every effort be exerted to equip all centres with this facility. In his 1976 report on the United Nations information centres system (A/C.5/31/14), the Secretary-General also envisaged the ultimate goal of a telex for every centre. In the past three years, about a dozen additional centres have been equipped with telexes, which brings the current total number of centres with telex facilities to 54. 2/

#### 2. Distribution of material

36. In order to ensure that information material reaches information centres in

---

2/ For a list of centres equipped with telex facilities, see annex II below.

time, the Inspectors have stressed the need to improve distribution service and techniques. They have also recommended the use of the most rapid means of dispatch to send important documents to centres. The Secretary-General is aware of the fact that the currently severely overloaded facilities of the diplomatic pouch service of the Organization often results in delays. That is why the Department of Public Information is using telecommunications as much as possible within reasonable budgetary limitations. When a document is newsworthy, the Department at Headquarters provides centres immediately with essential excerpts by telex or cable and ensures that advance copies in the appropriate languages are sent by the next pouch.

37. Present procedures for the selection and distribution of documentation and other information material to centres involve not only the Department of Public Information, but also the Department of Conference Services and the Office of General Services.

38. Official documentation sent automatically to centres on a daily basis is determined by the centre directors themselves, who are expected to choose annually the document series and the quantities and languages(s) their centres require. Their selections are reviewed by the Department at Headquarters to ensure that nothing essential has been omitted and that no exorbitant amounts have been requested. In the case of press releases, publications and similar material by the Department, the quantities sent to each centre are determined by the Department with due regard for each recipient's individual requirements with respect to subject-matter, language versions and appropriate quantities to be sent by the promptest means consistent with the need for economy. The distribution patterns for information material and for documentation are sent to the Department of Conference Services, which is responsible for sorting out the required amounts of the specified material for each centre. The actual shipment of this material, by pouch or surface mail, is carried out by the Office of General Services.

39. Efforts will continue to be made by the Department of Public Information, together with the Department of Conference Services and the Office of General Services, to remove or alleviate the present difficulties.

40. Apart from the dangers of inadvertent delays inherent in the multi-departmental operations described above, a frequent reason why material does not reach centres in time for them to adapt and use it to the best advantage is that it is not produced at Headquarters sufficiently ahead of time. Despite repeated reminders from the Information Centres Service to the producers of material designed for use on a specific date or occasion, this continues to recur, both within the Department and outside it. The Secretary-General expects that additional efforts will be made to improve the situation.

### 3. Local-language material

41. The Secretary-General endorses the Inspectors' opinion that translation facilities are necessary at Headquarters in order to transmit information material for centres in the most extensively-used languages. The Secretary-General's 1976 report, in this connexion, referred to:

/...

"The need to provide information centres in non-English-speaking areas with information in the appropriate languages, particularly those such as French, Spanish and Arabic, each of which is used in common by a significant number of centres. This would eliminate wasteful and inefficient duplication of work for many centres which are now required to make separate translations of identical English-language material sent from Headquarters, and to do this without access either to substantive guidance or to the necessary documentary references." (A/C.5/31/14)

#### 4. Development information

42. Two recommendations dealing with development information appear to be complementary in nature. Recommendation 35 states that "UNICs must assist in publicizing the concrete development work of the United Nations in the field", and recommendation 36 advises that United Nations information centres should "contribute to the dissemination of information on the development achievements of Member States". The long-standing policy of the Department of Public Information has been to depict successful development projects as achievements of the Member States concerned rather than achievements of the Organization. The emphasis is on what the country is doing with the assistance of the United Nations, not what the United Nations is doing in the country. In this sense, the Secretary-General agrees with both recommendations.

#### 5. Reference libraries

43. The report of the Joint Inspection Unit pays special attention to the role of reference libraries, which it recognizes as essential to the centres' operations. It notes that "the general public, mass media representatives and students turn to them for knowledge and information about the United Nations". The Secretary-General recognizes that not all centres have adequate physical facilities for their reference libraries, and that better arrangements are needed to provide prompt support and professional guidance for librarians or reference assistants of information centres. Delays which have been cited in responding to requests from centre libraries for specific publications and documents are sometimes owing to the fact that they have to be sent by the Department of Public Information to other departments or offices for action, quite apart from the slowness of the pouch service, to which reference has already been made. An attempt is being made to improve follow-up procedures in the services concerned of the Department of Public Information.

44. A distinction should be made between libraries of information centres and the reference in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit to depository libraries, which are collections of United Nations documentation maintained by major libraries outside the Organization. These depository libraries fall solely within the competence of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and are not part of the United Nations information centres system. Centre directors regularly provide assistance to the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, at its request, by inspecting and reporting periodically on the operation of depository libraries in their areas, but they have no independent responsibility for them.

45. Regarding the comprehensiveness of reference libraries of information centres, the publications available are limited to those of the United Nations system for a number of reasons, the most important being the need to avoid having centre libraries held responsible for utilizing publications which might contain substantive material objectionable to any Member State. Other reasons are the limited shelf space and the pervasive inadequacy of funds, to which the Inspectors made reference.

46. The Secretary-General welcomes the Inspectors' recommendation for a career development plan and in-service training programme for centre librarians or reference assistants. In fact, a policy has been initiated to raise the status and qualifications of reference assistants, as indicated in the Secretary-General's 1976 report on the United Nations information centres system (A/C.5/31/14). A one-week training seminar for reference assistants from centres in the Americas was organized at Headquarters in December 1977, with the assistance of experts from the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, and an effort will be made to increase such training courses as far as available resources permit. The Information Centres Service is also continuing the policy of recruiting only reference assistants with the necessary qualifications when posts become vacant by attrition, thus gradually achieving the goal of higher standards at all centres.

#### 6. Audio-visual material

47. United Nations radio programmes, films, photographs and posters supplied by the Radio and Visual Services Division of the Department of Public Information reach a wide audience in many countries through the activities of information centres, which play an important role in encouraging national television and radio stations to broadcast United Nations radio tapes and films. They also maintain libraries of United Nations films and those of other organizations in the United Nations system which they loan to schools, universities and non-governmental organizations for local screenings, often to large audiences.

48. Furthermore, since the resumption of periodic regional meetings of centre directors in 1974, the advice of centre directors on the usefulness in their regions of films and other information material produced at Headquarters has been conveyed directly and on a regular basis to all Divisions of the Department of Public Information for use in their production planning.

49. Some information centres have been instrumental in the production of local language versions of United Nations films. It is the experience of the Department that language versions, apart from the official languages of the United Nations, are best made in the country of use. With the assistance of the Radio and Visual Services Division, the information centre works with the local television outlet, the local educational film department or other distributors to prepare a master copy in the desired language. Headquarters will readily provide the required basic materials to permit a language version to be made and replicated. The suggestion that the Department should issue many films in a "double system", that is, with separate sound tracks carrying only music and effects so that narration may be added at the time of showing, is impractical in most cases for reasons of cost.

50. With regard to the disposal of obsolete films, there is little to be gained from passing them on to schools or clubs. If a film has been withdrawn (perhaps because the commentary states that the Security Council has 11 members), then that film should be destroyed. There may be some point in passing on old prints to archives within the country, and the Department will always be receptive to these proposals.

51. Two separate problems have been raised in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit:

(a) Should television broadcasters be permitted to use portions of United Nations films?

(b) Should such use be permitted without charge?

United Nations films are produced with the greatest care to achieve objectivity, balance and authority. The use of excerpts from such films may or may not be useful, depending on the context in which the excerpts are used. A request to use a portion of any United Nations film is judged in the light of the over-all intent of the programme: where such use clearly advances a United Nations purpose, permission is generally given.

52. Some of the material in United Nations films has been purchased by the Department for use in its own productions, and it may not have the right to permit the use of the material by other film producers. That is why each application must be considered at Headquarters. Frequently, sequences or excerpts which others wish to use are available as stock footage from the visual materials library of the Radio and Visual Services Division. They may be ordered on payment of the laboratory costs plus a royalty (which can be waived if the request comes from a developing country).

53. Regarding the question of United Nations charges, which are very small, the Department sees no reason why users in the more affluent countries should not pay them. There exists, however, a point of view urging the abandonment of all charges for television use of United Nations film materials, and this matter will be closely examined in the near future.

54. The Secretary-General is pleased to note the Inspectors' endorsement of the practice of collaboration and/or joint productions with television organizations for the making of films in Member States, and their recognition that, through the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC), some co-ordination in film production had been achieved and overlapping avoided in the work of the Department of Public Information and the specialized agencies.

55. With regard to the reported interest of television stations in short news clips, the Department's short news film reaches most of the world's television systems through such syndicators as Visnews and the United Press International Television News, with which the Department has close working relationships. If any centre receives requests from a television station for specific material, United Nations Television will respond promptly.



56. The Secretary-General notes the generally favourable comments of the Inspectors on the United Nations Radio Service and agrees with the need to relate its material as much as possible to the specific region or country concerned.

#### 7. Reporting to Headquarters

57. The Inspectors have suggested that the procedures for reporting by information centres to Headquarters should be simplified. The Secretary-General agrees, as seen from the fact that concrete measures to simplify reporting by centres were initiated in the summer of 1978, when the subject was discussed at length at a regional meeting of centre Directors in Europe.

58. It was agreed then that progress reports would be made quarterly instead of semi-annually, since monthly reports had been introduced in response to repeated requests for more systematic feedback from information centres concerning local media and public opinion on United Nations events and issues and also the impact of UNIC activities. In recent weeks steps have been taken, in consultation with other Divisions of the Department, to simplify the monthly reporting procedure by incorporating into a single form data required by all divisions.

59. It should be noted that the weekly administrative report, despite its title, is not a report in the usual sense of the word, but simply a device designed to simplify correspondence between Headquarters and the centres on day-to-day administrative and budgetary matters.

#### 8. Teaching about the United Nations

60. The Secretary-General shares the view of the Inspectors that "subjects on the United Nations are not normal features of the school curricula" in a great number of Member States. However, recent changes in educational priorities, concepts and methods have led to increased scope and depth in teaching about the United Nations, as indicated in the report of the Secretary-General and the Director-General of UNESCO to the Economic and Social Council in February 1975 (E/5610/Add.1). The report also found that "in the majority of countries, the subject (teaching about the United Nations) has become a generally accepted component of teaching and to an increasing extent is included in curricula, syllabuses and teaching materials".

61. Regarding the role of UNESCO, the Department has always worked in close consultation with UNESCO in its efforts to encourage teaching about the United Nations. At the same time, it should be noted that, while UNESCO has been actively engaged in the promotion of education for international understanding, co-operation and peace and fundamental freedoms, in accordance with the recommendations adopted on 19 November 1974 by the General Conference of UNESCO at its eighteenth session, the Department of Public Information remains the only office of the United Nations system directly concerned with assistance to Member States in order to intensify teaching about the United Nations and the global issues and problems which confront it.

62. At the national level, it is evident that national commissions for UNESCO are a principal motivating force in a great many countries and act as the co-ordinating agency for UNESCO-associated school projects or other national programmes of education for international understanding. However, it should be kept in mind that, under the terms of resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, Member States have committed themselves to the promotion of teaching about the purposes, principles, structure and activities of the United Nations; and the Department within its limited resources, can only give guidance and assist Member States in the fulfilment of their commitments. Furthermore, the policy and approach of individual Governments are essential factors. Without going into details, it is evident that the achievements of the centres are to be measured in relation to a particular country's readiness to promote teaching about the United Nations. It is also important to point out that teaching about the United Nations is an activity with many objectives. In most countries nowadays, learning about the Organization is no longer limited to a perfunctory examination of the institution, but is part of a broader programme involving global problems and needs of concern to the contemporary world.

63. While the activities of the United Schools Organization (USO) in India, of which the Inspectors have made special mention, are very valuable and worthy of encouragement, the Secretary-General feels that the USO's strong emphasis on the structure of the United Nations and its functions, and the amount of factual data which students are required to learn, may not be readily adaptable to countries of other regions; and similar school organizations should not necessarily be established in every developing country. The Secretary-General shares the Inspectors' view that the Department of Public Information should encourage USO activities through technical advice, exchange of information and similar measures. He considers, however, that provision of financial assistance for example, travel grants, cannot be accommodated within the limited funds of the Department.

64. Concerning co-operation with educational institutions and United Nations clubs, the Secretary-General feels that the effectiveness of action along the lines proposed by the Inspectors would depend realistically on the material resources devoted to it. The handicap of rising costs and decreasing resources available to the centres may be illustrated by the fact that, in 1951, the UN Day students' leaflet was distributed in 225,000 copies in 15 languages, whereas nowadays only 140,000 copies are printed in three languages. In 1952, there were 385 United Nations clubs and volunteer educational centres in 64 countries. Today they have virtually disappeared; one of the reasons for this may be the paucity of literature and other materials on the United Nations available to the centres. The Secretary-General, however, cannot but support the idea that centres should make an additional effort to enlist the co-operation of educational institutions and to strengthen their collaboration with United Nations clubs, wherever they exist, to promote interest in the United Nations among the young and, in some instances, to overcome apathetic attitudes towards the United Nations.

9. Relations with United Nations Associations and other non-governmental organizations

65. United Nations Associations and other non-governmental organizations are among the most important partners of United Nations information centres in helping to inform the public about issues and problems of concern to the world Organization. A special co-operative relationship has always existed between the centres and United Nations Associations with the joint objective of winning public support for the United Nations.

66. The Secretary-General supports the suggestion in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit of a recommendation by the General Assembly that Member States should encourage the establishment of new United Nations Associations and the strengthening of those already in existence. It would seem to be appropriate for the Committee to Review United Nations Public Information Policies and Activities, established by the General Assembly in resolution 33/115 C, to study this suggestion further.

67. Increased co-operation between the information centres and United Nations Associations was the subject for a discussion during the regional meeting of information centre directors in Europe in August 1978, in which the Secretary-General of the World Federation of United Nations Associations was an active participant. Subsequently, a circular memorandum on the results of the discussions was sent by the Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Public Information to the Directors of all United Nations information centres. 3/

68. While information centres already work closely with the Associations, they are also expected to broaden their contacts with other non-governmental organizations, such as trade unions and youth organizations, many of which can reach a very large audience on issues and problems of concern to the United Nations. Because of this, the Department of Public Information has recommended that the information centres, where appropriate, establish a formal relationship with non-governmental organizations, associating them directly with the centre, along the same lines as at Headquarters. Forty-five non-governmental organizations, for example, are associated with the United Nations Information Centre in New Delhi, and similar relationships are being studied by other centres.

69. In paragraph 119 of the report, the Inspectors have suggested that "some UNAs can share substantially in the dissemination of information on United Nations activities and DPI should enlist them as partners in this endeavour". In fact, most United Nations Associations are active in disseminating information about the United Nations, and the Department of Public Information has long regarded them as valuable partners in its own work. In certain large Member States in which there is no information centre, for example, Canada and the Federal Republic of Germany, special arrangements have been made to keep the United Nations Associations supplied by the Department with substantially the same amounts of United Nations public information materials which are normally provided to the information centres. In both countries, the United Nations Associations have undertaken to disseminate the United Nations information materials in the most effective way.

---

3/ For the text of the memorandum, see annex III below.

70. In such situations, the United Nations Associations concerned come close to filling the roles suggested by the Inspectors in paragraph 161 (b) of their report. However, these arrangements were arrived at through informal consultations with both the United Nations Associations and the Governments concerned, and they remain informal in nature. As for contractual services to the Department by United Nations Associations, the Secretary-General believes the present practice, in which they receive financial subsidies from their own Governments, is more appropriate, particularly since no funds exist in the budget of the Department for this purpose. It is also true that United Nations Associations often prefer to produce their own materials, rather than to disseminate those of the Department.

#### 10. Relations with the United Nations Development Programme

71. A co-operative relationship with UNDP is important to the work of all information centres, and particularly those in countries where there are separate organizations. The Inspectors' observations on this subject seem to the Secretary-General to be generally well-founded.

72. In this connexion, the Secretary-General is pleased to report that the continuing dialogue of the past few years between top-level officials of UNDP and the Department aimed at improving co-operation between their respective field establishments has recently been resumed and given new impetus. One result has been the establishment of a small task force to consider concrete measures to improve co-operation and interaction between UNDP and DPI at Headquarters and in the field.

73. The Secretary-General is pleased to note that the understandings reached by the Administrator of UNDP and the Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Public Information as a basis for improved co-operation between the Department and UNDP makes a clear distinction between the functional responsibilities of each party. This should eliminate possible ambiguities arising from the restructuring of the Secretariat.

#### 11. Relations with specialized agencies

74. The Secretary-General agrees with the Inspectors' view that "there is a need for United Nations agencies to co-operate by merging scarce resources for common objectives". He recalls that, in 1975, the Joint Inspection Unit issued a report on the regional structures of the United Nations system (JIU/REP/75/2), which suggested consolidating field information resources of the United Nations system, where appropriate, under existing information centres. This suggestion was subsequently considered both by the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) and the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC), which set up an ad hoc working group in 1976 to study the question. The working group began by making an inventory of which organizations had what public information resources and where, devising a comprehensive questionnaire which was sent to JUNIC members. Although the working group has not been active for the past two years, its work is being revived and a report will be submitted on this question to JUNIC at its next regular session in February 1980.

## 12. United Nations information centres in developed countries

75. The Inspectors studied six of the 15 United Nations information centres in developed countries, four of which they visited. They have commented (in para. 135) on the premises of three of the centres visited, Moscow, Paris and Rome, observing that the centre in Rome "suffers from cramped and inadequate accommodation, in spite of the fact that it is located in one of the main squares in Rome". The Secretary-General notes that the United Nations Information Centre in Rome is the only one of the six centres in developed countries studied by the Inspectors for which the Government of the host country provides rent-free premises. The Secretary-General's comments on the question of rent-free premises for information centres are given in paragraphs 21-24 above.

76. The Inspectors are of the view (see para. 139) that complaints by centres that non-information activities take up a high proportion of their time "are not fully justified". In this connexion, the Secretary-General recalls that, in 1975, the Joint Inspection Unit issued a "Note on certain aspects of the work of the Office of Public Information (OPI)" (JIU/NOTE/75/2), a major part of which was devoted to the non-information workload of the United Nations information centres in London and Paris. In his summary of principal findings and recommendations, the Inspector wrote, inter alia, under the subheading "Workload of information centres":

"The centres in Paris and London are heavily engaged in 'non-information' activities on behalf of the United Nations family, and their directors are locally regarded as the representatives of the United Nations (paras. 25-44)...

"It is appropriate that the information centres in London and Paris should provide non-information services to the United Nations, but some strengthening of their staffs is indicated, preferably by means of an increase in the budgetary provision for temporary staff. Such measures would, however, be without prejudice to a general review of the staffing of the two centres, which the Inspector considers to be desirable. The question whether the overhead costs of providing the services in question should be borne, on a user basis, by the various United Nations organizations and agencies involved (other than UNDP) is a policy issue which can only be decided at the legislative level; meanwhile, there is a case for simplifying the procedure for debiting specific charges for postage and freight and perhaps other services (paras. 47-64).

"Consideration should be given to the question of reimbursement by the United Nations agencies and organizations concerned of the additional costs incurred by information centres of providing services for them in the field of information (para. 65)." (JIU/NOTE/75/2, chap. IV, paras. 4-6)

77. In some cities in developed countries, the information centre functions in effect as a joint United Nations office for that country. The Secretary-General regrets the fact that the Inspectors did not have an opportunity to visit a centre such as the one in Sydney, to see for themselves the variety and range of activities important to the United Nations for which the centre is responsible. The Director

of the United Nations Information Centre in Sydney has for some years acted also as the representative in Australia, Fiji and New Zealand of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and it now seems likely that UNDP will also be represented at the Sydney centre.

78. At the time when the Inspectors carried out their study, the Director of the United Nations Information Centre in Tokyo also represented UNICEF, as has been the practice for many years. Now, as a result of agreements concluded this year, the Director of the Information Centre represents, in addition, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and UNDP is represented at the Tokyo centre. The Secretary-General considers that the successful arrangements existing in Sydney and Tokyo could make these information centres the forerunners of other combinations of field resources of the United Nations system, as envisaged in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the regional structures of the United Nations system issued in 1975 (E/5727).

### 13. United Nations Information Service at Geneva

79. The Inspectors have commented in some detail on the United Nations Information Service at Geneva as a special case, and their comments require clarification. The Inspectors consider that the Service is "neither a part of the Economic Commission for Europe nor of the Geneva Office of the United Nations".

80. The Secretary-General's opinion, however, is that formal inclusion of the Service in the structure of the United Nations Office at Geneva is appropriate for the following reasons: the staff of the Service are on the staffing table of the Geneva Office, while appointments, promotions and staff movements are largely the responsibility of New York; the budget proposals of the Service are submitted to and cleared by the Budget Division of the Geneva Office, and all expenditures are subject to local approval; the Director of the Service is, inter alia, the public information adviser to the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva and is responsible for all information activities concerning that Office; the production activity of the Service relates in large measure to the programme of the United Nations Office at Geneva.

81. There should be a clear recognition, however, both by the Department of Public Information and by the United Nations Office at Geneva of the Department's responsibility to ensure that the Professional posts in the Service are filled by staff with the appropriate qualifications and experience. Equally, there should be a mutual recognition of the responsibility of the United Nations Office at Geneva to ensure that the General Service support for operations of the Service is adequate. It should be understood that the Director of the Service must be in constant touch with the Department at Headquarters on questions of policy, programme, administration and finance.

82. As the budget of the United Nations Information Service at Geneva forms part of the United Nations budget, the Secretary-General fully agrees with the Joint Inspection Unit that budget preparations should be simplified, preferably by the direct submission of the budget proposals of the Service at Geneva to the Department

in New York. It would be essential, however, for the Service at Geneva to continue to be counselled by the Budget Division at Geneva in the preparation of its budget proposals and to have all expenditures monitored by the competent services of the United Nations Office at Geneva.

83. It should be noted that both UNCTAD and UNHCR have their own information units and are not served by the United Nations Information Service at Geneva, as stated in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit. There does exist a limited connexion in so far as these organizations (and others) participate in the weekly briefings arranged by the service at Geneva and benefit from the fact that the service maintains facilities for the media at the Palais des Nations. The organizations of the United Nations system also consult each other on matters of common interest and, on occasion, assist one another.

84. With regard to the operations of the Press Section of the United Nations Information Service two major considerations are (a) the need to establish a balance between services provided in English and French, and (b) the necessity to achieve a high level of productivity. The Secretary-General is examining measures which might be taken within existing budgetary structures to improve both linguistic balance and productivity of the staff.

85. The Public Relations and Documentation Section as it now functions has a staff of three Professionals and seven General Service (not 4 and 10, respectively, as indicated in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit). It would seem that, since 1 January 1979, the staff of the Visitors' Service has been responsible to the Office of the Director of United Nations Information Services at Geneva. The Public Relations and Documentation Section has a number of important responsibilities, which involve liaison briefings, supply of materials and other services to non-governmental organizations at Geneva and in the six countries (Bulgaria, the Federal Republic of Germany, Hungary, Poland, Switzerland and Spain) covered by the Service; production of publications, including preparation of language versions; the work of the documentation and reference unit, the distribution of publications and press releases and the answering of public inquiries; arrangements for special events, such as the European Regional Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations, to be held at Geneva in October 1979, and the annual Graduate Study Programme; and arrangements for exhibits.

86. The Secretary-General considers that the Inspectors' comments on the Visual Production Section do not give a complete view of this Section and its relations with Headquarters. It is not easy to establish and maintain a firm and helpful liaison with a newly-outposted unit to the satisfaction of everyone, and there have been problems. The Secretary-General notes, however, that in the United Nations Information Service at Geneva, the Organization now has a production facility which can serve the interests of the United Nations throughout Europe and elsewhere, when required. If the Service is able to move into video, as it hopes, a new dimension will be added to its traditional methods of news dissemination, with a same-day news service to television organizations. The Visual Production Section has also done useful work in the making of documentaries, vignettes and

language versions, and it has worked successfully in a number of locations outside of Geneva. In the Secretary-General's view, the work of the Section must remain within the over-all work programme and the budgeting of the Department and therefore subject to a constant dialogue with Headquarters. However, certain aspects of the work at Geneva, such as newsfilm production and assistance to television teams, should be subject simply to broad policy guidelines and it should be accepted by the Department that a part of the Section's function is to prospect and follow up film production possibilities for subsequent discussion with New York.

#### D. Organizational structure and management

87. Under the heading, "New directions", the Inspectors have made certain far-reaching proposals for changes in the structure and functions of United Nations information centres which require thoughtful consideration. While the Secretary-General maintains an open mind to all constructive suggestions for improving the effectiveness of the Secretariat, he would wish, before arriving at any final conclusions, to have the benefit of the considered advice of the intergovernmental bodies concerned, including the Committee to Review United Nations Public Information Policies and Activities and its parent body, the Special Political Committee of the General Assembly.

88. For that reason, the following comments and observations should be regarded as being of a preliminary nature, put forward with a view to facilitating a full discussion of the possible implications of the Inspectors' proposals.

##### 1. Structural changes

89. The Inspectors consider "that the United Nations Information Service should be regionalized" and that "far too much decision-making, often on very routine matters, takes place at DPI Headquarters" (para. 156). The Secretary-General can appreciate the possible benefits to be derived by a certain delegation of appropriate responsibilities away from Headquarters, particularly in view of the relatively small number of Headquarters staff serving the information centres.

90. With regard to the Inspectors' proposal to establish a small number of regional centres, the Secretary-General notes that, while the Department of Public Information would set the policy which should govern their work, it would also "delegate to the regional centres authority for the operations of UNICs in their regions" (para. 157). It is not clear how much authority would be retained by the Department at Headquarters for over-all planning and co-ordination of the total United Nations public information programme, or for administration and management of its field establishment as a whole.

91. The Inspectors also consider that the United Nations information services attached to the regional commissions "should be set up independently and with autonomy to take charge of the regional United Nations information programme" (para. 157). While the Department's work programme could conceivably benefit from



such an arrangement, the Secretary-General is bound to point out that it would have serious budgetary implications for the Department. At present, except for the Economic Commission for Europe, the information services attached to the regional commissions and to the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) are largely staffed and given all support services by the commissions themselves, with the Department contributing in each case the services of one Professional information officer.

92. An examination of the Inspectors' proposals for regional, subregional and national information centres indicates that the staff envisaged for both the regional and subregional centres would be distinctly larger than the Department's present staffing of above-average and average size information centres. This has been done, however at the expense of the staffing tables of "National UNICs (on a reduced scale)", which would have only four staff members, all of whom would be locally recruited. Experience of three decades indicates conclusively that a United Nations information centre consisting of an international Professional director (preferably full-time), a local Professional information officer, a qualified librarian and about three other local staff represents the minimum establishment required if a centre is to carry out effectively the functions expected of it. While some reduced United Nations public information facilities have been improvised in various field locations in the past to meet specific needs, and other substandard arrangements will probably have to be made in the future, it would not be in the interests of the Organization to give these the designation of "United Nations information centres".

93. In any event, the Secretary-General considers that the idea of substituting "national UNICs on a reduced scale" for existing United Nations information centres is not consistent with the enormous public information tasks confronting the Organization. In the developed countries, there is a particular need to counter misinformation about the United Nations from certain quarters and to foster public understanding of a number of key issues of priority concern to the Organization, whereas in the developing countries there exists a generally favourable public attitude towards the Organization.

94. The Inspectors have also proposed that national and subregional information centres should each year present work plans to the regional centre. The Department would approve a global plan and regional centres would execute their portion of it. The Secretary-General sees a danger in adding a hierarchical level between the Department and the centres which could generate further delays and paper work and place a majority of centres in a position of increased isolation from Headquarters. Centres generally want closer links with Headquarters. Under present arrangements, the annual work plans of information centres are determined largely by the mandates of the General Assembly and other United Nations bodies, as well as the over-all work plan of the Department. Nevertheless, there is still plenty of room for individual initiative by the centres in devising new approaches or projects relating directly to the countries or regions in which they serve. There are many instances of an initiative by one centre subsequently being put to use in other centres. This is done in consultation with the External Relations Division at Headquarters.

95. The Secretary-General notes that the Inspectors "favour a situation which would allow for the continuing use of the libraries, film stock etc. and, not least, the good will which has been built up" in the approximately 30 centres "which are not transformed into regional or subregional centres" (para. 160). This would seem to indicate that they are not insensitive to the practical and political implications of simply closing down existing United Nations information centres, and the possible reactions of Governments of the host countries concerned, particularly those which have been active in co-operating with and providing support to the information centres in their countries.

96. In short, the Secretary-General has serious doubts as to the desirability of the "regionalization" advocated by the Inspectors which involves a number of considerations. There is a need, in addition to that of paying due attention to regional interests, for the United Nations public information programme to project the global character of the Organization's aims and activities. If this need is to be met, there must be a careful distinction between regional production and regional control.

97. The concept of regional production of United Nations public information materials is not a new one and was carefully considered in the late 1960s. The idea of establishing regional production centres was not carried out, however, in the face of practical and logistic obstacles as well as the fact that neighbouring countries are not always on the best of terms.

98. These difficulties were recognized in November 1968 by the Committee on the Reorganization of the Secretariat, when it wrote, in a report submitted to the General Assembly at its twenty-third session, that:

"It would seem to the Committee that serious thought should be given to the possibility of regrouping and concentrating the information centres, taking into consideration regional, subregional and other important characteristics of an area. The Committee is aware, however, that communication and transportation problems exist in various regions of the world, and that the political sensitivities of Governments may, in reality, make it difficult to establish regional or subregional information centres in which all the United Nations efforts in public information overseas could be concentrated" (A/7359, para. 41).

Although more than 10 years have elapsed, it is still true that problems of communication and transportation, as well as local custom delays in clearing packages of information material are such that regional and subregional information centres, were they to be established today, might have to send information material and documentation to nearby countries by United Nations pouch services via Headquarters.

## 2. Hiring of correspondents

99. In order to carry out United Nations public information activities in some 90 countries which would have no direct link with an information centre, the Inspectors have proposed the hiring of "individual journalists or approved organizations" (paras. 161, 181; recommendation 33). Desirable as it may be to have direct United Nations public information services extended to all Member States the Secretary-General can, nevertheless, foresee certain practical difficulties in implementing such a scheme.

100. The Department of Public Information has long made good use of media personnel in various regions of the world, hiring them on the basis of special service agreements, which are contracts for a specific task of limited duration. The Department has also experimented successfully in making co-operative arrangements with such organizations as United Nations Associations and in co-production of films with outside film producers. It would be quite a different matter, however, to employ a journalist as a "correspondent" to disseminate United Nations information on a continuing basis. Quite apart from the possibly detrimental effects such an arrangement might have on a journalist's professional status, one might wonder, for example, if such outside persons or organizations could be expected to be as responsive to the policy directives of the Department as regular staff. Assuming that suitable people could be found and recruited in an adequately selective way, they could not operate without minimum secretarial services for typing, telephones, files of information material etc. Apart from the cost factor, estimated at between \$1 million and \$2 million per year, the administrative problems arising from such a scheme would seem to be unwieldy.

## 3. Role of the Field Operations Division

101. In another proposal, which involves the organizational structure and management of the system of information centres, the Inspectors have recommended that "the Field Operations Service (now 'Field Operations Division') should not be involved in the administrative and personnel questions of United Nations Information Centres" (recommendation 18).

102. Until 30 April 1959, the information centres, which then numbered 26, were administered by the Overseas Administration Unit, located in the Executive Office of the Department of Public Information. On 1 May 1959, in accordance with a Secretary-General's Bulletin (ST/SGB/121 of 16 April 1959), the work and functions previously carried out by the Executive Office of the Department were given to the Field Operations Service in the Office of General Services.

103. Before the change was effected, the Field Operations Service had been servicing the special United Nations missions set up in various parts of the world, staffed with local and international personnel, and had devised an administrative reporting system for those missions. The decision to use the Field Operations Service as a channel for administrative communication with the information centres was designed to ensure that established United Nations practices and procedures

would be applied uniformly to the staff in all the overseas offices of the United Nations. This is why the Inspectors found "that, for administrative and some personnel matters (particularly matters concerning General Service staff), Directors had to address themselves to the Field Operations Service (FOS), a division of 'General Services' instead of the External Relations Division of DPI" (para. 99).

104. While the Office of General Services is satisfied with the present arrangements, the Department of Public Information is inclined to agree with the Inspectors' finding that:

"Psychologically and practically, this arrangement removes DPI from being at the core of decision-making on matters that concern the daily running and morale of the Centre. While DPI is consulted by FOS on substantive questions that arise, the Inspectors consider that it would be more organically sound for DPI to deal with these administrative and personnel questions itself, consulting Personnel Services or others as required." (para. 100)

Another important consideration is that DPI has found itself somewhat removed by this arrangement from the problems and planning of operational resources allocated to centres. It has also led to confusion on the part of the staff of the centres as to which office is actually responsible for their affairs, apart from the extra work and time involved in the necessary constant interdepartmental consultation.

105. The Secretary-General is grateful to the Inspectors for calling his attention to this matter, and intends to look further into it with both the Department of Public Information and the Office of General Services and possibly with the assistance of the Administrative Management Service.

#### 4. Conclusion

106. In order to succeed, measures to improve the effectiveness of United Nations information centres must, in the Secretary-General's view, strengthen the links between the Department of Public Information, the regional centres and all the segments of the United Nations public information system. Centres rely on the Department as the heart of the operation to evaluate and to decide on the messages and themes to be conveyed to a worldwide audience. Therefore, in the guidelines it formulates, in its selection of material and in the separate messages it conveys for dissemination to the public, the Department is the nerve centre of the whole operation.

107. Many centre directors have made it clear that any improvement in United Nations public information services depends to a large degree on removing the prevailing feeling of remoteness between the Department and the field. To this end, there must be an effective two-way flow of ideas, the possibilities for adaptation to meet particular needs and the over-all flexibility that makes a good information service. Its ultimate success, furthermore, depends not only on the availability of adequate funds, equipment and materials, but on

the steady build-up of a reservoir of high-calibre professionals on whose expertise and skills an efficient information service can be established.

108. The Secretary-General, for his part, intends to give further detailed consideration to the recommendations outlined in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit in order to introduce proposals for improving the effectiveness of the system of information centres. Implementation of certain recommendations will depend, of course, not only on new initiatives by the Department, but on the co-operation of other departments and offices in the Secretariat. In the long run, of course, as the Inspectors rightly point out, the success of these efforts depends in large measure on the co-operation of Member States, on whether they consider the dissemination of United Nations information a matter of major concern, and on the degree of support they are prepared to give to the system of information centres.

### III. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS

109. The recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit, and the Secretary-General's comments thereon, are summarized below in the order in which they appear in the report and under the headings to which they relate.

#### A. Public information resources and their adequacy

##### 1. Budgets

Recommendation 1: "The trend towards a larger share of the total DPI budget being devoted to UNICs should continue at least until UNICs account for 50 per cent of the total DPI budget."

Comment: See paragraph 18 above.

Recommendation 2: "The distribution of UNIC's budgets among objects of expenditure should be changed to provide more funds for operating expenses. The percentage of UNICs' funds devoted to staff costs is too high and leaves insufficient funds for travel, communications and equipment."

Comment: Agreed. See paragraphs 15 and 16 above.

##### 2. Staffing

Recommendation 3: "To help alleviate the shortage of staff at many UNICs, posts should be transferred to them from DPI Headquarters and some reallocation of staff among UNICs should be made while taking into account Recommendation 2."

Comment: See paragraphs 17, 19 and 20 above.

Recommendation 4: "The geographical composition of DPI staff is unbalanced and action is required urgently to redress the imbalance in favour of developing countries."

Comment: See paragraphs 25 to 29 above.

Recommendation 5: "The need for highly qualified professional public information staff has been stressed by the General Assembly; further efforts are needed to attain this objective."

Comment: Agreed. See paragraph 30 above.

Recommendation 6: "The information and reference assistants of UNICs now in the General Service category should be classified as local professionals following the example of UNICEF."

Comment: Agreed. See paragraph 33 above.

B. Premises, libraries and equipment

1. Premises

Recommendation 7: "A minimum space norm for UNICs should be established and should provide adequately for the library, reading room and store."

Comment: Agreed.

2. Libraries

Recommendation 8: "UNICs libraries, which are a nucleus for the Centres' contact with the public, should be given adequate facilities, prompt support and regular professional guidance. Similarly, the servicing of depository libraries should be improved, and regular contact maintained between them and the Centres."

Comment: Agreed. See paragraphs 43 to 45 above.

Recommendation 9: "A career development plan should be introduced for Librarians/Reference Assistants of UNICs, accompanied by an in-service training programme."

Comment: Agreed. See paragraph 46 above.

3. Equipment

Recommendation 10: "Arrangements should be made to ensure that equipment is in regular running order and that consumable material is always available. Highest priority should be given to equipping UNICs with telex."

Comment: Agreed. See paragraph 35 above.

C. Relations between DPI Headquarters and the United Nations information centres

1. Printed materials (press releases, summaries etc.)

Recommendation 11: "DPI should carefully select the material it sends to UNICs and concentrate on that which responds to the interests of the area covered by the UNIC."

Comment: Agreed. See paragraphs 36 to 40 above.

Recommendation 12: "The DPI distribution service and techniques should be improved to ensure that information material reaches UNICs in time."

Comment: Agreed. See paragraphs 36 to 40 above.

Recommendation 13: "UNICs should make greater efforts to provide timely background material for newspaper and magazine editors and the national press services."

Comment: Agreed. See paragraph 40 above.

2. Audio-visual information

Recommendation 14: "A more formal disposal policy for films and other material should be introduced."

Comment: See paragraph 50 above.

Recommendation 15: "Television broadcasters should be permitted to use excerpts from UN films without charge."

Comment: See paragraphs 51 to 53 above.

Recommendation 16: "Posters should be designed so as to be more easily comprehensible to the general public."

Comment: Agreed.

3. Delays

Recommendation 17: "Frequent and excessive delays by Headquarters in responding to requests and queries from UNICs should be eliminated."

Comment: Agreed. See paragraphs 19 and 20 above.

4. Role of Field Operations Service

Recommendation 18: "The Field Operations Service should not be involved in the administrative and personnel questions of UNICs."

Comment: See paragraphs 104 to 108 above.

5. Reporting to the Department of Public Information

Recommendation 19: "Reporting should be simplified and should cover substantive, not routine matters. There should be a semi-annual progress report."

Comment: Agreed. See paragraphs 57 to 59 above.

D. Relations between Member States and United Nations information centres

Recommendation 20: "Host Governments should play a more active role in making the work of UNICs more effective."

Comment: Agreed.



E. Relations between United Nations information centres and interest groups

1. Schools, universities, scholars

Recommendation 21: "More efforts are required by UNICs to enlist the co-operation of educational institutions and United Nations Clubs."

Comment: Agreed. See paragraph 64 above.

Recommendation 22: "UNESCO should be consulted on measures to intensify teaching about the United Nations in schools."

Comment: Agreed. See paragraphs 60 to 62 above.

2. Non-governmental organizations

Recommendation 23: "The General Assembly might wish to recommend that Member States facilitate the establishment and strengthening of UNAs and that in doing so they receive full co-operation and technical advice from DPI. UNAs should become partners of UNICs in the dissemination of information."

Comment: Agreed. See paragraphs 65 to 68 above.

Recommendation 24: "In some countries where United Nations Associations (UNAs) are well organized or where active United Nations or UNESCO clubs exist, the Secretary-General should, on an experimental basis, possibly under a contractual arrangement, allow such organizations to share with UNICs in the dissemination of UN information."

Comment: Agreed. See paragraphs 69 and 70 above.

Recommendation 25: "Commendable efforts being made by individual NGOs, such as the United Schools Organization of India, should be acknowledged, widely publicized and supported."

Comment: Agreed. See paragraph 63 above.

F. The role of United Nations information centres in developed countries

Recommendation 26: "Where UNICs are headed by 'Acting Directors' because they are citizens of the host country, they should be given the title of Director."

Comment: See paragraph 32 above.

Recommendation 27: "The Secretary-General should continue efforts to persuade the Governments concerned to meet the rental costs of UNIC premises in their country."

Comment: Agreed. See paragraphs 21 to 24 above.

G. United Nations Public Information Service in Geneva (UNIS)

Recommendation 28: "The complex procedure for the preparation of the budget of the UNIS should be simplified."

Comment: Agreed. See paragraph 85 above.

Recommendation 29: "The composition of the professional staff of the UNIS should be re-examined to improve geographical distribution and to ensure better professional qualifications. The staff should be more realistically deployed among the units."

Comment: Agreed in part. See paragraphs 29, 87 and 88 above.

Recommendation 30: "More delegation of authority, particularly for the production of visual material, is required from Headquarters to avoid duplication of effort."

Comment: See paragraph 89 above.

H. New directions

Recommendation 31: "The UN Information services should be regionalized within a transitional period of three to four years. Regional Centres independent of Regional Commissions should be established as well as subregional Centres to cover very large countries or homogeneous groups of countries."

Comment: See paragraphs 90 to 101 above.

Recommendation 32: "A nucleus of about four staff members should be retained at those national UNICs which do not become Regional or Subregional UNICs."

Comment: See paragraphs 95 and 96 above.

Recommendation 33: "Individual journalists or approved organizations should be employed as correspondents to write and disseminate information on the UN. Journalists may be assigned to UNDP offices or to approved UNAs or UN Clubs as correspondents of UNICs."

Comment: See paragraphs 102 and 103.

Recommendation 34: "National and Subregional UNICs should each year present work plans to the Regional Centre. DPI would approve a global plan and Regional Centres would execute their section of the plan."

Comment: See paragraph 97 above.

Recommendation 35: "UNICs must assist in publicizing the concrete development work of the UN in the field."

Comment: Agreed. See paragraph 42 above.

Recommendation 36: "UNICs should contribute to the dissemination of information on the development achievements of Member States."

Comment: Agreed. See paragraph 42.

Recommendation 37: "The staffing pattern of UNICs should be revised in accordance with the suggested new structure and priority should be given to recruiting staff from the country, region or subregion of the UNIC. There is need for career development planning and for more training of the staff of UNICs."

Comment: Agreed in part. See paragraphs 25 to 34 above.

ANNEX I

List of United Nations information centres and offices

ACCRA (established March 1958)

Information Centre serves Ghana, Guinea and Sierra Leone.

ADDIS ABABA (established April 1960)

Information Centre serves Ethiopia. Also serves as Information Service for the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

ALGIERS (established September 1963)

Information Centre serves Algeria.

ANKARA (established March 1975)

Information Office serves Turkey.

ANTANANARIVO (established January 1963)

Information Centre serves the Comoros and Madagascar.

ASUNCION (established October 1962)

Information Centre serves Paraguay.

ATHENS (established April 1954)

Information Centre serves Cyprus, Greece and Israel.

BAGHDAD (established April 1963)

Information Centre serves Iraq.

BANGKOK (established October 1951)

Information Centre serves Democratic Kampuchea, Hong Kong, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Singapore, the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam and Thailand. Also serves as Information Service for the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

BEIRUT (established September 1962)

Information Centre serves Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. Also serves as Information Service for the United Nations Economic Commission for Western Asia (ECWA).

BELGRADE (established November 1950)

Information Centre serves Albania and Yugoslavia.

/...

BOGOTA (established May 1954)

Information Centre serves Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela.

BRUSSELS (established January 1975)

Information Centre and Liaison Office serve Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.

BUCHAREST (established June 1970)

Information Centre serves Romania.

BUENOS AIRES (established November 1948)

Information Centre serves Argentina and Uruguay.

BUJUMBURA (established June 1961)

Information Centre serves Burundi.

CAIRO (established April 1949)

Information Centre serves Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

COLOMBO (established August 1961)

Information Centre serves Sri Lanka.

COPENHAGEN (established December 1946)

Information Centre serves Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

DAKAR (established April 1964)

Information Centre serves the Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, the Ivory Coast, Mauritania and Senegal.

DAR ES SALAAM (established June 1961)

Information Centre serves Malawi, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.

GENEVA (established February 1947)

Information Centre serves Bulgaria, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Holy See, Hungary, Poland, Spain and Switzerland. Also serves as Information Service for the United Nations Office at Geneva and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE).

ISLAMABAD (established March 1951 in Karachi)

Information Centre serves Pakistan.

KABUL (established October 1951)

Information Centre serves Afghanistan.

KATHMANDU (established April 1964)

Information Centre serves Nepal.

KHARTOUM (established October 1963)

Information Centre serves Somalia and the Sudan.

KINSHASA (established July 1964)

Information Centre serves Zaire.

LAGOS (established May 1967)

Information Centre serves Nigeria.

LA PAZ (established September 1963)

Information Centre serves Bolivia.

LIMA (established April 1960)

Information Centre serves Peru.

LISBON (established November 1977)

Information Centre serves Portugal.

LOME (established May 1962)

Information Centre serves Benin and Togo.

LONDON (established January 1947)

Information Centre serves Ireland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

LUSAKA (established October 1975)

Information Centre serves Botswana, Namibia, Swaziland and Zambia.

MANAMA (established November 1977)

Information Centre serves Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

MANILA (established August 1953)

Information Centre serves the Philippines.

MASERU (established February 1978)

Information Centre serves Lesotho.

MEXICO CITY (established August 1947)

Information Centre serves Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Mexico.

MONROVIA (established October 1950)

Information Centre serves Liberia.

MOSCOW (established April 1948)

Information Centre serves the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

NAIROBI (established August 1974)

Information Centre serves Kenya.

NEW DELHI (established January 1947)

Information Centre serves India and Bhutan.

PARIS (established March 1947)

Information Centre serves France.

FORT MORESBY (established April 1962)

Information Centre serves Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands

PORT OF SPAIN (established January 1962)

Information Centre serves the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, the Netherland Antilles, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.

PRAGUE (established December 1947)

Information Centre serves Czechslovakia and the German Democratic Republic.

RABAT (established December 1962)

Information Centre serves Morocco.

RANGOON (established June 1959)

Information Centre serves Burma.

RIO DE JANEIRO (established March 1947)

Information Centre serves Brazil.

ROME (established July 1958)

Information Centre serves Italy and Malta.

SAN SALVADOR (established July 1960)

Information Centre serves Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama.

SANTIAGO (established March 1951)

Information Centre serves Chile. Also serves as Information Service for the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA).

SYDNEY (established November 1948)

Information Centre serves Australia, Fiji and New Zealand.

TEHERAN (established May 1950)

Information Centre serves Iran.

TOKYO (established April 1958)

Information Centre serves Japan and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

TRIPOLI (being established)

Information Centre to serve the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

TUNIS (established May 1960)

Information Centre serves the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya\* and Tunisia.

VIENNA (established January 1972)

Information Centre serves Austria. Also serves as Information Service for the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

WASHINGTON (established October 1946)

Information Centre serves the United States of America.

YAOUNDE (established October 1965)

Information Centre serves Cameroon, the Central African Empire and Gabon.

---

\* Pending the opening of the United Nations Information Centre at Tripoli.



ANNEX II

United Nations information centres with  
Telex numbers

Accra	Lisbon
Addis Ababa	Lomé
Algiers	London
Ankara	Lusaka
Antananarivo	Manama
Asunción	Manila
Athens	Maseru
Baghdad	Mexico City
Bangkok	Monrovia
Belgrade	Nairobi
Bogotá	New Delhi
Brussels	Paris
Buenos Aires	Port Moresby
Bujumbura	Port of Spain
Cairo	Rabat
Colombo	Rangoon
Copenhagen	Rio de Janeiro <u>a/</u>
Dakar	Rome
Dar es Salaam	San Salvador
Geneva	Santiago
Islamabad	Sydney
Kathmandu	Teheran
Khartoum	Tokyo
Kinshasa	Tunis <u>b/</u>
Lagos	Vienna
La Paz	Washington <u>c/</u>
Lima	Yaoundé

---

a/ Approved but not yet installed.

b/ The United Nations Information Centre pays one third.

c/ Rented.

ANNEX III

Interoffice memorandum dated 3 October 1978 from the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information, Mr. G. Akatani, addressed to the directors of United Nations information centres and services concerning the centres' relations with national United Nations associations

This past week I met with Mr. Frank Field, Secretary-General of the World Federation of United Nations Associations. We discussed the relationship between national United Nations Associations and the United Nations information centres.

In this regard, I should like to reiterate our earlier mandate that calls for a special relationship between United Nations Associations and United Nations information centres. Their charter and purposes coincide with the aims of the Office of Public Information and therefore it should always be borne in mind that the United Nations information centres should go out of their way to help the local United Nations Associations in whatever manner seems appropriate: in calling meetings, helping with programme development, exhibits, film showings and other activities and particularly the organization of United Nations Day programmes and those for Human Rights Day.

In those areas where no UNA exists or where the UNA is weak, I would hope that you would take special measures to establish or strengthen the organization in view of the special relationship described above.

The Office of Public Information has recently encouraged some kind of formal association between United Nations information centres and national non-governmental organizations where such a move is feasible. This activity should be undertaken in harmony with the local UNAs, not in competition with them, using the Headquarters' relationship as a model.

-----