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### JOINT INSPECTION UNIT

#### Implementation of the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit

#### Report of the Secretary-General

The General Assembly, at its twenty-seventh session, requested the Secretary-General to submit annually to the Assembly a succinct report on those major recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit affecting the United Nations which had not been implemented, together with the reasons therefor. At its thirty-second session, the Assembly adopted resolution 32/199 of 21 December 1977, by which it decided that the future reports of the Secretary-General on implementation of the recommendations of the Unit should provide concise information only with regard to those reports which had been indicated by it to be of interest to the Assembly, one of its Main Committees or its other subsidiary organs. This report is submitted in accordance with those decisions. In this report, the Secretary-General has included detailed information on the status of implementation of the recommendations of the Unit in nine reports, with a view to providing a clear indication of what is being done with regard to each set of recommendations.

\* A/43/150.

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## I. EVALUATION

1. A report on evaluation entitled "Third report on evaluation in the United Nations system: integration and use" was submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-first session (A/41/202). Another report on the subject, entitled "Status of internal evaluation in organisations of the United Nations system" (A/41/201) was submitted to the General Assembly at the same session. These reports included a number of recommendations addressed specifically to the United Nations Secretariat. The related comments of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination and of the Secretary-General were transmitted to the General Assembly in documents A/41/304 and A/41/409 respectively. The two reports of JIU contain, in addition to their conclusions, five main recommendations. At its forty-second session, the General Assembly, by decision 42/455, took note of the four reports.

2. In responding to the recommendations of JIU, the Secretary-General draws attention to his report on the application of evaluation findings in programme design, programme delivery and policy directives in which the conduct of in-depth and self-evaluations was discussed (A/43/179). That report refers to evaluation standards, integration of evaluation in the programme cycle, training and resources, and addresses many of the issues raised by JIU. Since the preparation of the two JIU reports under discussion, another report has been prepared by the Unit on the performance and results of United Nations programmes: monitoring, evaluation and management review components (A/43/124). The Secretary-General has also prepared comments on that report (A/43/124/Add.1).

Recommendation 1: Each organization should take action firmly to integrate evaluation and other basic processes into a streamlined, responsive, performance-oriented information system, which is reassessed and further improved in a longer-term management development process.

3. In his comments on this recommendation the Secretary-General drew attention to the self-evaluation system that was to be established (A/41/409). This self-evaluation system has since been set up, in October 1986, as an ongoing activity, making provision for building the evaluation function at every stage of an activity (when formulating the medium-term plan, at the programming stage and during implementation).

4. Efforts are being made, particularly through briefing sessions and advisory support from the Central Evaluation Unit, to ensure that self-evaluation is perceived as a helpful tool for assisting programme managers in decision-making and management, and for assessing the efficiency, effectiveness, relevance and impact of their programmes by systematically measuring accomplishments against objectives. The need to be more output-oriented has been emphasized by the Central Evaluation Unit in all its briefing sessions and guidelines issued to programme managers. An assessment of the self-evaluation system is contained in document A/43/179, which is before the General Assembly.

5. The machinery for evaluation is in place and the integration of evaluation in the whole programme planning, budgeting and monitoring cycle will become more effective when findings from the evaluation exercises are applied more systematically. Training, improvement of methodology, establishment of indicators and feedback mechanisms are examples of some areas that need to be addressed so as not to lose the momentum gained so far. On the question of training in evaluation, responsibility has primarily rested with the Central Evaluation Unit, but because of limited resources very little has been done. As is pointed out in the above-mentioned report (A/43/179), training is one area that will require greater attention for the conduct of self-evaluation and the application of findings to be effective.

6. The consolidation of the programme planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation functions within the Office for Programme Planning, Budget and Finance (established in 1987), following recommendations of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency and Financial Functioning of the United Nations, should facilitate the fuller integration of evaluation as part of the programme planning process.

Recommendation 2: Each organization should gradually establish clear standards and terms of reference for the various types of evaluation that it regularly employs, to build the credibility of evaluation and maintain it as a sound, objective source of decision-making support. Evaluation units should oversee the quality of evaluation work, and management and governing bodies should provide continuing feedback on evaluation reporting in order steadily to improve its quality and relevance to their decision-making needs.

7. The United Nations Evaluation Manual was issued in October 1986 and will be modified and updated on the basis of experience gained. Guidelines and instructions have also been issued by the Central Evaluation Unit and other units having an evaluation capacity in order to assist programme managers in the conduct of the first round of the self-evaluation exercise. As pointed out by the Secretary-General in his report on application of evaluation findings, self-evaluation activities were better conducted in units where there was an established mechanism for evaluation for the purpose of providing guidance and feedback (A/43/179, para. 25). Such mechanisms will, however, need to be strengthened to ensure that the momentum gained in self-evaluation activities is not lost, particularly as the Central Evaluation Unit is already somewhat burdened by its responsibilities at Headquarters and would not be able to provide the necessary support to field offices.

Recommendation 3: Each organization should continue actively to seek out specific co-operative and co-ordination activities, where possible, to help strengthen the overall management capacities of Governments, share evaluation experience and harmonize and simplify evaluation approaches.

8. As already indicated in the Secretary-General's comments on the above-mentioned recommendation, Governments have played and will continue to play an important role in the evaluation process as end-users providing feedback for in-depth evaluation, as participants in the formulation of United Nations

programmes and projects and as participants in tripartite reviews (for UNDP-financed projects) (A/41/409, para. 12). The Secretariat stands ready to assist Governments in other evaluation matters when called upon to do so.

9. The Secretariat, including the regional commissions and sectoral bodies, participates in the annual inter-agency working group on evaluation organized by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), as well as in other ad hoc meetings and consultations to exchange experiences. As part of the Secretariat's efforts made to share evaluation experience, harmonize and simplify evaluation procedures, the United Nations Newsletter is prepared twice a year.

Recommendation 4: Each organisation should keep the professional staffing needs of its central evaluation units under close and continuing review, particularly in the light of in-depth evaluation work-loads, to ensure that resources match responsibilities and do not jeopardize basic evaluation system quality and expansion.

10. As indicated in the comments on recommendation 2, the Secretary-General has recognized that mechanisms for evaluation need to be established and/or strengthened, particularly in the light of the establishment of the self-evaluation system, but has had to exercise restraint owing to the prevailing resource constraints.

Recommendation 5: The Secretary-General and the Programme Planning and Budgeting Board should give all possible support to the central monitoring and evaluation units to move ahead now to install and effectively use monitoring and evaluation throughout the Organization. Three major tasks already requested by the General Assembly and the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination during 1981-1984 should receive priority attention.

(a) Preparation of a progress report on strengthening evaluation systems and units in the United Nations system.

11. A report of the Secretary-General on strengthening the capacity of the United Nations evaluation units and systems was submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-first session (A/41/670).

(b) Determination of adequate resources for the Central Evaluation Unit.

12. The Central Evaluation Unit, which was established in March 1985, has assumed the responsibilities of both the former Programme Analysis and Evaluation Unit of the Office of Financial Services, under section 28B of the programme budget, and those of the Evaluation Unit of the Programme Planning and Co-ordination Office, under section 6 of the budget, as well as responsibilities for the establishment and oversight of the self-evaluation system that was initiated by the Secretary-General in October 1986. However, the staffing of the Unit remained at the level of the Evaluation Unit of the Programme Planning and Co-ordination Office, that is, four Professional posts, as the posts of the Programme Analysis and Evaluation Unit of the Office of Financial Services were assigned to the newly established Central Monitoring Unit.

13. When the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Finance was established in 1987, one Professional post was redeployed to the Central Evaluation Unit. Nevertheless, the Central Evaluation Unit needs to rely heavily on the support of evaluation units at the regional and sectoral levels for the conduct of the self-evaluation activities in terms of providing guidance and feedback.

(c) Development by the Central Monitoring Unit of systematic and up-to-date data on actual programme delivery.

14. As indicated in the report of the Secretary-General on programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 1986-1987, programme performance monitoring data has now been computerized for easy retrieval (A/43/326 and Add.1). The monitoring of activities is a relevant part of the conduct of self-evaluation and the computerization of such monitoring data will facilitate the timely examination of, for example, progress or changes made towards the achievement of objectives.

## II. PUBLICATIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

15. A report on this subject was submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-first session (A/41/591). The related comments of the Secretary-General as well as of the International Court of Justice were transmitted to the General Assembly in document A/41/591/Add.1. The JIU report contained, in addition to its conclusions, eight recommendations. At its forty-second session, the General Assembly, by its resolution 42/225 of 21 December 1987, took note of the report of JIU as well as of the comments of the Secretary-General and the International Court of Justice.

16. By its resolution 42/225, the General Assembly also invited the International Court of Justice to continue to examine the question of the dissemination of judgments and advisory opinions of the Court. It invited the Secretary-General to report on this matter to the General Assembly not later than at its forty-fourth session.

17. It should be recalled that in paragraph 3 of its comments (A/41/591/Add.1, annex II) on the Joint Inspection report, the International Court of Justice stated that:

"... the Court is obliged to make clear that it opposes the adoption of the particular recommendations contained in the JIU report. In the Court's considered view, these recommendations, well-intentioned as they are, are unsound and could not be implemented as they stand without the expenditure of large sums additional to the Court's current budget. If they were nevertheless to be accepted, this could seriously prejudice the judicial processes and product of the Court."

Account must also be taken in this connection of the similarly adverse comments submitted by the Office of Legal Affairs on the JIU report, which the Chairman of the Sixth Committee transmitted to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee (A/C.5/42/50) during the latter's consideration of this matter at the forty-second session of the General Assembly.

18. Consequently, the Secretary-General does not intend to implement the recommendations in the JIU report. As requested by the Assembly in resolution 42/225, however, the Secretary-General will report to the Assembly at its forty-fourth session on the question of the dissemination of judgments and advisory opinions of the Court.

### III. ORGANIZATION AND METHODS FOR OFFICIAL TRAVEL

19. A report on this subject was first prepared by JIU in 1982 (A/37/357 and Corr.1), in which the policies, procedures and general management of travel undertaken on United Nations business were examined and a number of recommendations aimed at reducing the overall cost of travel put forward. Following consideration of that report, the General Assembly adopted resolution 37/241 of 21 December 1982, which called upon the Secretary-General to undertake a number of measures in compliance with the report's recommendations. A follow-up report on the subject (A/41/121) was submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-first session. The related comments of the Secretary-General and of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions were transmitted to the General Assembly in documents A/41/121/Add.1 and A/42/790 respectively. The JIU follow-up report contained, in addition to its conclusions, one specific recommendation.

20. The Secretary-General notes that JIU acknowledged in its report that various measures had been undertaken by the Secretary-General in pursuance of its earlier recommendations in this area and in particular that "the review of the measures undertaken by the Administration of the United Nations to implement General Assembly resolution 37/241 has revealed that some positive results have been achieved" (A/41/121, para. 120).

21. The Secretary-General conveyed his comments on the report of JIU in document A/41/121/Add.1. Since the matters raised by JIU are of a continuing nature, they will require updating as more information becomes available. However, as regards the recommendation of JIU that the Secretary-General "prepare a comprehensive report to be submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-first session describing what he has done, up through the preparation of the report, to implement the JIU recommendations endorsed by General Assembly resolution 37/241", the Secretary-General did not consider it necessary to prepare a comprehensive report beyond his comments contained in document A/41/121/Add.1.

Recommendation: The Secretary-General should prepare a comprehensive report to be submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-first session describing what he has done, up through the preparation of the report, to implement the JIU recommendations endorsed by General Assembly resolution 37/241. Specifically the report would inform on:

- (a) The feasibility of establishing an "in-plant" operation or a United Nations-owned and operated travel agency at United Nations Headquarters with in-house branch offices at all major duty stations. If the Secretary-General concludes that it is feasible to have either one or the other and if he has not yet acted to do so, he would inform the Assembly on the time-frame for doing so. Conversely, if the Secretary-General considers that no form of "in-plant" arrangement is a viable proposition nor is a United Nations-owned and operated agency a feasible scheme, he would explain clearly why, through the provision of legal, economic, financial, managerial (including human resource and general administrative elements) and moral reasons.

22. As was previously conveyed to the General Assembly by the Secretary-General after a comprehensive study of this question, the Secretary-General concluded that the two options advanced by JIU were not viable options at Headquarters at the present time:

(a) The "in-plant" option does hold more hope for the United Nations because IATA rules that had tended to restrict its operation have been repealed. This allowed the United Nations to seek information from potential bidders on this option in its latest requests for proposals for travel services at Headquarters (the contract was subsequently awarded to the company Ask Mr. Foster). On the basis of the information submitted and on purely economic grounds, the Organization did not consider this option to be superior to the arrangement subsequently entered into. However, the option is under consideration at the United Nations Office at Geneva, where efforts to replace Thomas Cook S.A. are still under way.

(b) The idea of a United Nations-owned travel agency as recommended by JIU is not feasible in New York. Travel practices and commission rates paid generally require that only 20 per cent of the volume of business generated by such an agency should be from the sponsoring organization, in this case, the United Nations. This would thrust the Organization deeply into the commercial world of travel agency as it would need to generate at least 80 per cent of its business from outside the Organization in order to qualify for the higher commission rates paid by airlines. The Secretary-General does not consider that this is desirable.



- (b) The efforts made to seize extant opportunities to reduce costs through the direct purchase of tickets from air carriers around the world, through participation in the various incentive schemes of air carriers; through the purchase of tickets in bulk; and other cost-saving devices. The results of these efforts would be quantified. Obstacles to widening these efforts would be described, with an indication as to whether they can be resolved or whether, for the foreseeable future, they constitute an impediment to further gains.

23. The question of direct purchase of tickets has been thoroughly investigated by the Secretariat and though it seems to offer the possibility of large savings to the Organization, it has obvious limitations that render it unsuitable for United Nations travel. There are for instance restrictions that make it impossible to change itineraries as circumstances dictate. Most United Nations travel is to areas that lie beyond major duty stations and is ticketed on an excursion fare basis. Moreover, it is not uncommon for United Nations travellers to change itineraries many times in the course of a single trip. Cheap tickets generally require that the itinerary remain the same once the booking has taken place and the ticket has been purchased.

24. Secondly, some forms of rebating are considered illegal in the United States, making the proposition less desirable for New York. For the most travelled route, New York/Geneva, the major carrier was not responsive to granting any discounted or special prices for block purchases of tickets. However, in negotiating the present contract and as a result of the JIU comments and recommendations on this point, an effort was made to obtain certain benefits from carriers that, in some ways, lower the overall cost of travel for the Organization.

- (c) A thorough assessment of the results of the three-year contract entered into with Don Travel Service Inc., effective 1 November 1986. The net financial benefit to the United Nations should be calculated, making use of the United Nations audit review of the travel agency's income. An evaluation of the quality of the service provided should be made with staff participation.

25. The contract with Ask Mr. Foster, which had acquired Don Travel Service, was evaluated by the Secretariat before it was put out to bid the second time. The Secretariat devised a system for obtaining comments from travellers by attaching a comment sheet when issuing tickets. The expectation was that dissatisfied travellers would use these comment sheets to convey their complaints and assess the agency's service. An actual poll of users was also conducted, although to a limited extent, by the Accounts Division, and the Internal Audit Division which selected names of travellers at random and canvassed them; the results of the polls were favourable to the contractor. Similar polls will be conducted during the current contract with Ask Mr. Foster.

- (d) Whether, as recommended by the Inspector in paragraph 62 of the present report [A/41/121], the contract entered into with Thomas Cook S.A. at Geneva on 1 April 1985 for a period of three years has been terminated.

26. The problem at Geneva as regards Thomas Cook S.A. remains unresolved. The contract was put out to bid and a new travel agent was selected. However, when informed that it was the lowest bidder, the contractor declined the contract and asked to renegotiate the terms of the arrangement. The United Nations Office at Geneva was thus forced to extend the contract with Thomas Cook S.A. pending negotiation of new arrangements. Thomas Cook also happened to be the next lowest bidder. Because of the problems encountered so far in finding a suitable travel agent at Geneva, the Office is considering an "in-plant" arrangement as a possible way out. This would offer the United Nations as a whole first hand experience with an "in-plant" arrangement as recommended by JIU.

- (e) Whether, as recommended in paragraph 36 of the present report [A/41/121], the contract with Don Travel Service Inc., has been extended for a period no longer than one year pending a joint decision on all the issues.

27. As recommended by the inspectors, the present contract was extended for one year before the United Nations went out to bid on the contract. In the subsequent bidding, however, the current contractor was the lowest bidder and will therefore be awarded the contract for the next five years.

#### IV. CHANGING USE OF COMPUTERS IN ORGANIZATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM AT GENEVA: MANAGEMENT ISSUES

28. A report on this subject was submitted to the General Assembly at its fortieth session (A/40/410). The related comments of the executive heads of organizations concerned on the report and of the Secretary-General were transmitted to the Assembly in documents A/40/410/Add.1 and A/41/686 respectively. Section IX of the report of JIU set out, in addition to its conclusions, eight recommendations addressed to the organizations of the United Nations system at Geneva. At its forty-second session, the General Assembly, in its decision 42/455, took note of the three reports.

29. The follow-up reporting of the Secretary-General on this matter relates only to those recommendations of JIU that are pertinent to the United Nations Secretariat itself. It does not therefore encompass recommendations 2 (addressed to governing bodies), 3 (Advisory Committee for the Co-ordination of Information Systems), 6 (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and International Trade Centre) and 8 (Administrative Committee on Co-ordination).

Recommendation 1: Each organization should establish clear-cut central responsibilities for the orderly planning and control of overall information systems development, with sufficient high-level stature and adequate management and technical staff expertise and time made available for this purpose.

30. This recommendation calls for the establishment of clear-cut central responsibilities for planning and control of overall systems development with high-level participation and adequate expertise. In the case of the United Nations, a Steering Committee made up of the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management, the Assistant Secretaries-General for General Services, for Programme Planning, Budget and Finance and for Human Resources Management, and the Director of the Electronic Services Division is actively overseeing the development of an Integrated Management Information System for the Organization (discussed in A/C.5/42/18). In addition to this high-level Committee, the project has a full-time manager and a user committee, composed of representatives of the administrative offices affected. The United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna and the regional commissions are an integral part of the systems development process.

Recommendation 4: Each organization should establish and maintain a well-rounded programme of computer training, not only in procedures for computer use but to provide basic "computer literacy" training and understanding for all staff who will be involved in computer system development and operations.

31. The establishment and maintenance of a programme of computer training has long been a goal of the Training Service of the Office of Human Resources Management, which works in close co-operation with the Electronic Services Division on the subject. Despite limited resources, the 1988 Staff Development Programme for the United Nations Headquarters contains many courses relating to computer literacy, the development of micro-computer skills and computer briefings for managers. In addition, at the request of various offices and departments, the Training Service organizes ad hoc courses relating to computers. The United Nations Office at Geneva is more severely hampered by resource limitations, and attempts to extend funds by utilizing training resources from other agencies as well as from Headquarters have been made wherever possible.

Recommendation 5: Each organization should ensure a high degree of computer systems and management systems skills in future professional recruitment for information management posts, not only for central computer and management systems or services staff but for data base administrators, records management staff, librarians, archivists and related staff as well.

32. An effort will be made to carry out this recommendation in the future as the opportunity to consider candidates for recruitment for these functions arises.

Recommendation 7: The Secretary-General of the United Nations should take urgent action to (a) ensure a clear-cut process for overall United Nations information systems development; (b) reassess the adequacy and centralized-decentralized balance of management services and computer systems staffing in major United Nations duty stations; and (c) have the Administrative Management Service determine the United Nations Office at Geneva systems development staffing needs based on a detailed survey of present and projected user requirements.

33. This recommendation is being implemented. The Technological Innovations Board is considering as part of its work programme the balance between centralized and decentralized services. With regard to recommendation 7 (c), the suggested study by the Management Advisory Service has not taken place.

#### V. ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE IN THE UNITED NATIONS

34. A report on this subject (A/41/640) was submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-first session. The related comments of the Secretary-General were transmitted to the General Assembly in document A/C.5/41/14. The report of the Secretary-General included, in addition to his comments on the report of JIU, proposals concerning an office of Ombudsman within the framework of the United Nations and for streamlining the appeals procedures. The General Assembly decided by its decision 41/464 to defer until its forty-second session consideration of the report of the Secretary-General.

35. At its forty-second session, the General Assembly had before it another report of the Secretary-General on the subject, which dealt with the concerns expressed by JIU as well as with its specific recommendations (A/C.5/42/28). In its resolution 42/220 B of 21 December 1987, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to improve the procedures for resolving disputes and appeals by taking steps that would ensure their objective and expeditious resolution.

36. The Secretary-General fully shares the view of JIU that an objective, fair and expeditious resolution of staff grievances is essential to good management. Accordingly, a major programme of reform has been instituted with regard to the various aspects of the internal system of administration of justice. This is described in the report of the Secretary-General on this subject, which will be before the Assembly in a separate document. The Secretary-General believes that the steps now initiated will help to deal effectively with the situation that gave rise to the JIU report and recommendations.

#### VI. PROBLEMS OF STORAGE AND ITS COSTS IN ORGANIZATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

37. The JIU report entitled "Problems of storage and its costs in organizations of the United Nations system" (A/41/806 and Corr.1) was submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-first session. An addendum to that report (A/42/724 and Corr.1), detailing the follow-up findings and recommendations of JIU, was

published in November 1987. Section V of the JIU report set out, in addition to its conclusions, nine recommendations addressed to Governments, to the organizations within the United Nations system and to relevant inter-agency bodies. The related comments and the reports on action taken in response to those recommendations submitted by the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination and the Secretary-General were conveyed to the General Assembly in documents A/42/673 and A/42/295 respectively. The views of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on those reports are reflected in document A/42/7/Add.9. At its forty-second session, by resolution 42/225 of 21 December 1987, the General Assembly took note of those reports.

38. It should be noted that the comments of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the recommendations of JIU as conveyed in document A/42/295 by and large confirm the implementation wherever possible of the Inspectors' proposals. In the addendum to their report, the Inspectors stated that they were "encouraged by the discussion of their report at the Interim Inter-agency Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications" and that they appreciated greatly "the thoughtful comments on their report by the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination and the United Nations Secretary-General" (A/42/724, para. 4). The Unit further recognized that progress had been achieved in addressing a number of the proposals; hence, the comments that follow will indicate only those actions taken by the Secretary-General since the Inspector's most recent report on the matter was issued in November 1987.

39. It should also be noted that the prevailing period of financial restraint has continued to affect greatly the ability of the Secretariat to implement some of the recommendations made by the Inspectors. That notwithstanding, additional progress has been achieved in the implementation of the remaining recommendations as well as in further pursuing the goals of those recommendations on which progress had already been reported.

Recommendation 1: The organizations of the United Nations system should strictly apply the resolutions of their legislative bodies pertaining to the limitation of documentation. Wherever applicable they should also consider the following additional measures so as to reduce initial press runs and stocks of documentation.

- (a) Sending letters to Member States and other addressees inviting them to reconsider both the number of items and copies they receive with a view to reducing them.

40. The Secretary-General continues to place a special emphasis on the monitoring and encouragement of the observance of the regulations governing the control and limitation of documentation. (It should be recalled that this is a matter on which the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations had also made a specific recommendation (recommendation 7), <sup>1</sup>/ which was endorsed by the General Assembly.) Statistics reveal that the stabilization in the level of documentation processed by the Department of Conference Services reported by the Secretary-General in document A/42/295 has been maintained. It will be recalled that the response to the notes verbales addressed by the

Under-Secretary-General for Conference Services and Special Assignments to representatives of Member States on the subject in 1986 did not result in significant reductions. However, follow-up communications have been sent in January and April 1988 to secretariat and official recipients of United Nations documentation seeking their co-operation in reviewing their requirements with a view to reducing their standing orders. Although the exercise is still under way, some progress has been noted in reducing the overall quantity of documents distributed within the Secretariat.

41. While the Secretary-General has not issued instructions to set numerical limits on the number of copies of documents and publications available to delegations and ministries, intergovernmental organizations, United Nations officials and other recipients, the revised guidelines governing stock review and disposal contain provisions that require the conduct of a full review of both official and departmental distribution patterns, estimated secondary distribution needs and the amount of storage space available as a process for establishing the size of the initial print run, prior to the printing of any documentation.

42. It should also be recalled that other measures aimed at controlling the level of documentation have taken the form of establishing page limits for reports emanating from both subsidiary organs and from the Secretariat. At its 1987 session, the Committee on Conferences looked carefully at statistics provided by the Secretariat which reveal a trend towards a closer adherence to the 32-page limit for reports of subsidiary organs set by General Assembly resolution 37/14 C of 16 November 1982. Statistics also reveal stricter compliance with the 24-page limit imposed by the Secretary-General on documents prepared by the Secretariat. The Committee on Conferences has, moreover, included in the agenda of its 1988 session the consideration of a report, contained in document A/AC.172/127, on communications from Member States circulated as documents of the United Nations.

43. With the goal of maximizing the sale of successful publications and of trimming print runs, the Publications Board has recently decided to undertake, in co-operation with the Department of Conference Services, a review of both official and author department distribution lists, with the purpose of eliminating duplication and achieving a better balance between publications distributed at no charge and those disseminated through the sales operation.

(b) Introducing two-column printing of documents using smaller print similar to newspapers.

44. For the reasons detailed in paragraph 3 of the 1987 follow-up report (A/42/295), the Secretary-General has not found it advisable to introduce at this stage and as a general production method the format and print changes proposed by the Inspectors. However, technological developments, such as the gradual introduction of more sophisticated word-processing printers, will be carefully observed with a view to determining whether they could lead to changes in format or presentation that would result in meaningful reductions in the size of initial print runs and stocks of documentation. The Secretary-General will also continue to monitor the experience gained in such matters by other agencies of the common system.

- (c) Inserting a note on the cover page of all documents issued informing delegations of the limited production of documentation for reasons of economy and inviting them not to request additional copies.

45. Experience with the use of such notices in the past has revealed that the practice does little to reduce secondary requests for documentation in United Nations meetings. As an alternative to this proposal, the Secretary-General has begun including brief notices on certain documents indicating that only limited quantities have been produced and encouraging delegates to bring along to meeting rooms the copies of documents that they have received at their offices.

- (d) Charging Member States and other users of documents for copies requested above the established quota.

46. As conveyed in paragraph 5 of the 1987 follow-up report, this proposal has been implemented to the extent that it is cost-efficient and practical to do so.

Recommendation 2: Strict regulations outlining policies for stock review and disposal of surplus mimeographed documents, official records and publications should be enforced in the organisations where they exist and established and applied where they do not.

47. As stated in earlier reports, in 1987 the Publications Board issued revised guidelines governing the continuous review and disposal of stock of official records, publications and documents, which reduced drastically both the volume of printed materials stored and the period for which they would be retained in stock for secondary distribution requests. As a result of the strict application of that revised instruction at the time of vacating the Long Island City warehouse, 60 per cent (amounting to approximately 1,198 tons) of the material previously stored at the warehouse was disposed of during the period October to March 1987. The material to be disposed of was sold as bulk matter for recycling, while the remaining stocks were relocated to converted garage space in the basement of the Secretariat building. As a part of its established work programme, the Department of Conference Services will conduct an annual review of stocks in strict compliance with the provisions of the revised guidelines for stock review and disposal and will continue to report the results thereof to the Publications Board.

48. It should be noted that the reduced central storage capacity available to the Department of Conference Services has obliged some departments and offices to hold part of their stock in their own severely limited office space; thus, the ability to meet secondary distribution requests will undoubtedly be hampered and requests for reprints of items no longer kept in stock will be required. The degree to which these consequences will be felt cannot as yet be fully determined, since the shelf-life of publications is on an average three years and the reductions to stocks retained have been in effect for little over one year.

Recommendation 3: Strict regulations should be established and implemented to create common registries in departments. Archives should be sent to a common archives centre, instead of being housed in offices. Such archives centres should be under the jurisdiction of trained archivists.

49. Regulations in respect of the archives of the United Nations are contained in administrative instruction ST/AI/326, entitled "The United Nations Archives". That instruction details the responsibilities of the Archives Section and Secretariat units and staff members at Headquarters in the management, retention and disposal of records. It also provides information for the use of other United Nations organs and secretariat units away from Headquarters. Annex I to the instruction consists of guidelines concerning the classification and declassification of the records and archives of the Secretary-General.

50. Within the Secretariat at Headquarters, the Records Management Section of the Office of General Services works with departments and offices to assist them in establishing and maintaining their own registries. Departments and offices are responsible for conducting periodic reviews of their files and for forwarding to the United Nations Archives materials over three years old. Trained archivists then review those files and retain materials which it is considered should be retained for limited periods and those which should be deposited as a part of the institutional memory of the United Nations.

Recommendation 4: For financial as well as for safety reasons, the United Nations Headquarters warehouses in Long Island City and Park Avenue should be vacated and stocks moved to the United Nations garage.

Recommendation 9 (b): An agreement should be made with the Park Avenue warehouse landlord to secure the buy-out money for moving it and the Long Island City warehouse to Headquarters.

51. In 1986, a special working group was established to investigate possible means to implement these recommendations. In co-operation with the Department of Conference Services, that working group was able to identify space within the garage of the United Nations Headquarters complex, which, after its conversion to an appropriately designed, secured and climate-controlled area, would be suitable for the storage of documentation and publications to fulfil secondary distribution requirements and for temporary storage pending initial distribution processes. Because the lease on the Long Island City warehouse was scheduled to expire on 31 December 1986, the working group believed that the efforts to relocate materials stored in external warehouses in the United Nations Headquarters complex should focus first on the stock retained in Long Island City. After a strict application of the revised guidelines on the retention and disposal of such stocks, the lease on the Long Island City warehouse was discontinued effective 31 March 1987 and the stocks formerly kept there were transferred to the converted garage space. The savings resulting from relinquishing the Long Island City warehouse are estimated at \$400,000 per annum.



52. The working group also gave careful attention to the recommendations regarding the space rented on Park Avenue to house the United Nations Archives. After a careful review, the working group realized that the rented space on Park Avenue did not constitute a warehouse in the same sense as that rented in Long Island City; in many aspects, the purpose and operation of the United Nations Archives more closely resembled those of institutional reference libraries. In addition to identifying adequate space within the United Nations Headquarters complex, replacing the 40,000 square feet rented on Park Avenue, the working group understood that other special environmental conditions would have to be met in order to ensure the preservation of the institutional memory of the Organization as it exists in the form of the United Nations Archives. For example, room temperatures and humidity levels would have to be controlled and adequate exhaust and waterproofing systems installed if the Archives were to be partially relocated to the United Nations garage, as suggested by the Inspectors. Furthermore, because of the highly sensitive nature of some of the materials housed, adequate security systems would have to be put in place. Suitable research rooms would have to be provided to accommodate accredited outside users of the Archives, and adequate office space for the 21 staff members (including five professional archivists) of the Archives Section would have to be identified.

53. Despite diligent efforts, the working group was not able to identify sufficient space in the Headquarters complex to house fully the United Nations Archives. Although fragmenting the space assigned to the Section was also considered, it was found that the cost of converting the garage space into an area suitable for the storage of the Archives would not have been cost-effective compared to the financial benefits to be gained through the buy-out of the lease by the landlord of the Park Avenue facility. Also, considering the fact that the rental fee for the space leased on Park Avenue is at the level of approximately \$8.16 per square foot, while the Organization is paying up to \$30.00 per square foot in rent for office space outside the Secretariat building, it is considered that, relatively speaking, the lease that the United Nations holds until 1993 on the Park Avenue space represents very favourable terms for the Organization at this time. For the time being, the Secretary-General will continue to monitor developments in respect of the overall allocation of space within the Headquarters complex and will bear in mind the valuable recommendations offered by the Inspectors.

Recommendation 5: The relocation of numerous storage places at the United Nations Office at Geneva, already agreed upon between Publishing and General Services, should be implemented as rapidly as possible.

54. While financial constraints continue to pose certain difficulties, progress has been achieved in addressing this recommendation. For example, between 70 and 80 per cent of the documentation stored at the United Nations Office at Geneva has been relocated into one conveniently located area. In order to move most of the remaining 20 to 30 per cent of the documentation stocks, structural changes will have to be made to the two additionally designated adjacent storage spaces. Although the financing for this construction is not yet available, the possibility of redeploying funds at the Office is being actively pursued.

55. Three suitable areas have likewise been identified to concentrate the storage of most of the stock of publications housed at the United Nations Office at Geneva. The actual consolidation of the stock in the areas cannot as yet be achieved pending the provision of funding to purchase shelving and equipment and to effect the changes required to the space. Because the plan was conceived after the approval of the programme budget for the biennium 1988-1989, the appropriate provisions to equip and alter this space were not included in the original budgetary proposals. However, suggestions for redeploying funds to give priority to the completion of this project are currently being discussed.

Recommendation 6: In the organizations where efficiency and cost savings can be achieved through such means, compactus equipment, microform storage, computer-based systems and other applications of automation should be introduced and utilized for storage purposes.

56. As a part of its continuing programme of work to effect cost-saving measures that will lead to increases in operational efficiency, additional actions have been taken within the Secretariat that reflect the spirit of the proposals offered in this recommendation. For example, the Department of Conference Services continues its programme to install compactus shelving in the North Lawn Building and the converted garage space to increase storage capacity for documentation and publications. Provisions have likewise been made for the installation of much-needed compactus shelving in the Documentation, Reference and Terminology Section to expand the storage capacity for the multilingual reference collection so vital to the work of the Translation Services of the Department of Conference Services. The microfiche programme begun in the Dag Hammarskjöld Library in 1969 remains in effect. Finally, of particular interest to the rationalisation of initial documentation and publication print orders, the first phase of the introduction of a computerised inventory and stock control system has been completed. Once fully operational, as expected during the course of 1988, the system is expected to provide the Distribution Section of the Publishing Division of the Department of Conference Services with more readily available data on the movement of publications in stock and will permit a faster, more accurate analysis and adjustment of print orders to accord with projected demand. It will also enable the Section to better programme and manage the storage space available.

57. In addition to undertaking a pilot project at the United Nations Office at Geneva using optical-disc technology for the storage and retrieval of documentation, as described in paragraphs 60 and 61, the programme budget for the biennium 1988-1989 includes a provision for the acquisition of equipment for the Geneva Library's programme of automation. The acquisition of this equipment is intended to improve that Library's ability to conduct searches and referencing activities and to retrieve information from the collections, in line with recommendations made by JIU. Unfortunately, however, constraints imposed in the 1986-1987 budget biennium as a result of the Organization's financial crisis resulted in freezing spending on the purchase of equipment for the United Nations Office at Geneva. In fact, the Publishing Service's programme of microficheing documentation and publications, long in place to alleviate the storage problems at the Office, virtually came to a halt in 1986 when the appropriation for the

purchase of new equipment was cancelled. As a part of its efforts to address both the valuable recommendations offered by JIU on the use of storage space at the Palais des Nations at Geneva as well as the need continually to up-date the methods and equipment used so as to render storage operations more cost efficient, the Publishing Service at Geneva has formulated a revised acquisition programme that would include the purchasing of the equipment required to resume the microfiche operation. As mentioned earlier, appropriate budgetary arrangements in the form of approved redeployments of funds will have to be contemplated by administration and conference service staff.

58. While technological innovations, in the form of the computerization of certain of its operations, have been introduced in the United Nations Archives, it should be noted that the flooring structure at the Park Avenue location cannot support the weight of compact shelving. The same is the case for the majority of the floors at the United Nations Secretariat building, also enhancing further arguments outlined in paragraph 52.

59. Although the financial difficulties confronting the Organisation have hampered to some degree their ability to introduce such means as those proposed by JIU in this recommendation, it should be stated that all departments and offices have indicated their eagerness to pursue such improvements.

Recommendation 7: The optical-disc-based system being most promising in resolving the problems of storage and retrieval of documentation, a test project of this system should be initiated as soon as possible. To achieve maximum efficiency and savings, this project should be authorized for the United Nations Office at Geneva both in the Publishing and Library Services, where the storage facilities are the most deplorable.

60. The potential of optical-disc-based technology for enhancing efficiency and effecting a better management of space and information storage has been recognized by Member States and the Secretary-General alike. It was clearly acknowledged that the use of optical-disc technology to relieve the acute storage problems at the United Nations Office at Geneva would perhaps be the most pressing initial application of the technology. However, in the light of the current financial crisis of the Organisation and the need to ensure that the form of optical-disc technology ultimately selected would be compatible with automated systems already in place and those planned for the future, it was deemed advisable to proceed with a series of several small, less costly projects undertaken concurrently beginning in 1989 for varied applications at different locations. It was further agreed that such projects would be funded from within existing budgetary resources and that the results would be utilized as a means of evaluating the possibilities, effectiveness and cost of the technology. A Secretariat working group meets frequently to discuss and plan these pilot projects, and the implementation of at least one pilot project at Headquarters is expected during 1988.

61. In addition, it has been possible to launch one large pilot project using optical-disc technology at the United Nations Office at Geneva. This project is being supported, as suggested by the Inspectors, within existing resources and with the support of one Member State. The test project, which is for the storage and long-distance high-speed transmission and retrieval of conference documents, is well under way and will last for one year. One storage and retrieval station (consisting of a scanner, a personal computer with a high-resolution screen for checking any retrieval, a second high-capacity personal computer for use as a viewer and two disc drives) as well as a retrieval station (consisting of a personal computer with a high-resolution screen and a printer) have already been installed at the United Nations Office at Geneva. For the duration of the pilot project the main jukebox attached to the system will be located in Paris. During its one-year duration, the project will be monitored by a working group consisting of representatives from administration and conference services staff at the Office. The working group will report regularly to the Director of the Electronic Services Division of the Office of General Services of the Department of Administration and Management at Headquarters. Developments will also be closely watched by the Department of Conference Services. While it is as yet premature to judge the degree to which optical-disc technology will alleviate the critical immediate storage problems at the United Nations Office at Geneva, it is believed that the system holds great potential for the storage and long-distance high-speed retrieval of the full text of documents.

Recommendation 8: The organizations of the United Nations system should temporarily postpone acquiring optical-disc technology, especially in the field of storage and retrieval, so as to see the results of a test project at the United Nations Office at Geneva in order to acquire a system that can interface existing and future technologies and permit using documentation and facilities of other organisations.

62. The Administrative Committee on Co-ordination has commented on this recommendation in paragraphs 12 to 14 of document A/42/673. The Secretary-General will, of course, share with the other organizations in the common system the experiences gained through the optical-disc pilot projects described in paragraphs 60 and 61.

Recommendation 9 (a): For the United Nations Office at Geneva, authorization should be given to finance this test project (acquisition, installation, maintenance and operation of the equipment) by redeploying resources within the 1986-1987 budget and by not applying to the Publishing Service and Library any new cut or deferment in the approved 1986-1987 appropriations, should such measures be deemed necessary again in 1987 to cope with the financial crisis of the Organization.

63. The budgetary constraints imposed as a result of the prevailing financial crisis of the Organisation during 1986-1987 precluded the implementation of this recommendation.

Recommendation 9 (b): An agreement should be made with the Park Avenue warehouse landlord to secure the buy-out for moving it and the Long Island City warehouse to Headquarters.

64. The implementation of this recommendation is addressed in paragraphs 51-53.

Recommendation 9 (c): An appeal should be launched to Member States either to make advance contributions to the regular budget (to be deducted from their future contributions) or voluntary contributions for the purpose of introducing the optical-disc-based system.

65. The pilot project involving optical-disc technology currently under way at the United Nations Office at Geneva has been made possible through voluntary contributions made by one Member State.

#### VII. MANAGEMENT OF INTERPRETATION SERVICES IN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM AND THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES

66. A report on this subject was submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-first session (A/41/648). The related comments of the Secretary-General and of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination were transmitted to the Assembly in documents A/42/95 and A/42/672 respectively. Section VIII of the report of JIU set out in addition to its summary of conclusions contained five recommendations. At its forty-second session, the General Assembly, in its decision 42/455 took note of the three reports.

Recommendation 1: The biennial Inter-agency Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications should include a regular agenda item to jointly consider the organisations' perceptions of current and emerging demand and supply problems and trends for interpretation and other language services.

67. This recommendation is being adhered to. The agenda of the 9th Inter-agency Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications, which took place at the United Nations Office at Geneva from 27 June to 1 July 1988, contained the item "Demand and supply problems and trends for interpretation and other language services". The Department of Conference Services will endeavour to ensure continued compliance with this JIU recommendation.

Recommendation 2: The organizations with significant use of regular staff interpreters - FAO, IAEA, UNESCO, UNIDO and especially the United Nations for each of its four major interpretation staffs - should regularly present to the appropriate oversight committee of their governing bodies summary data analysing actual staff interpreter workloads, and consider actions to better attract and utilize local free-lance interpreters.

68. Detailed statistics on the work-load of the permanent interpretation staff in the context of the biennial proposed programme budgets are regularly prepared by the Department of Conference Services and submitted to the General Assembly. In accordance with the request of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and

Budgetary Questions, the Department has taken action to rationalize and standardize the gathering and presentation of statistical information about the provision and utilization of conference-servicing resources. It utilizes local free-lance interpreters, when available, as a first source of temporary assistance. At the same time, efforts are continuing to improve co-ordination between Headquarters locations for the loan of permanent staff during non-peak work-load periods to fully utilize existing resources.

Recommendation 3: Each organization should regularly provide the appropriate oversight committee with summary statistics on the proportion of late, cancelled, and unscheduled meetings - grouped by major subsidiary organs and organizational units - to identify problem areas and consider needed actions to improve the efficiency of conference resource use.

69. The Department of Conference Services submits regularly to the Committee on Conferences statistics showing the planned and actual utilization of interpretation services by a "core" group of bodies meeting at United Nations Headquarters in New York, the United Nations Office at Geneva and the United Nations Office at Vienna (see A/AC.172/88 and Add.1-6, which cover the years 1980 to 1987). The manner in which the statistical information is presented has undergone modifications as the Committee on Conferences has refined its monitoring techniques. The Committee has made use of these statistics over the years in urging a better utilization of services from other subsidiary organs, and the General Assembly has requested the Committee to continue its efforts in this field.

Recommendation 4: The Secretary-General of the United Nations and the General Assembly, in their current review of the financial crisis of the Organization, should consider certain review, control and scheduling measures to improve conference resource use and cut costs.

70. The improvement of conference resource use and reduction of costs in every aspect of conference services is a basic consideration of the management of this Department. Action undertaken in relation to recommendation 3 above is part of the ongoing endeavour to encourage intergovernmental bodies to improve the efficiency with which they utilize the conference resources placed at their disposal. In this context the Department regularly reminds all departments and offices that serve as substantive secretariats to intergovernmental bodies of the importance of careful planning for meetings, and seeks their co-operation in exercising restraint and prudence in requesting and utilizing meeting services. Moreover, to cope with the underutilization of conference resources owing to the late starting/early ending and cancellation of scheduled meetings, the Secretariat devised the principle of "over-programming", which was approved by the Committee on Conferences and endorsed by the General Assembly, and has resulted in better utilization of meeting servicing resources. Efforts are also being made, through the Committee on Conferences, to even out the calendar of conferences by staggering meetings and conferences throughout the year so as to enable the Department to make better use of its permanent staffing resources and thus reduce the necessity of recruiting more expensive temporary assistance personnel. Ultimately, however, a more efficient calendar of conferences depends upon decisions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.

Recommendation 5: The Secretary-General of the United Nations should:

- (a) Reassess the latest cost factors and technical developments in the video-conferencing area to determine whether it has now become financially feasible to begin using remote conference interpretation servicing.

71. The Technological Innovations Board established within the Secretariat is mandated to keep under continuous review all technical developments that might affect any aspect of the Organization's work, including remote conference interpretation servicing.

- (b) Attempt to develop and apply, using the recent experience of other organizations, computer-assisted management processes for at least the most time- and cost-consuming interpretation management functions, which are now often performed on a laborious manual basis by senior interpretation staff.

72. The United Nations Interpretation Service is in the process of establishing a computer-assisted system of interpreters' assignments. Informal consultations have taken place on a software package that would meet that Service's needs. A formal proposal for the implementation of this programme has been submitted and is being reviewed by the Technological Innovations Programme of the Department of Conference Services. At the same time, the computerization of the draft calendar of conferences has also begun. The compilation and maintenance of the United Nations calendar of conferences involve a series of operations, some simultaneous, some consecutive, that would benefit considerably from computer assistance. While such a process could never be reduced to a purely mechanical level because of political and other variables involved, computer assistance could permit a clearer overview of all factors that must be taken into account in scheduling.

- (c) Review the low grade levels of staff interpreters in ESCAP and their differing translation/interpretation status and duties.

73. Action in pursuance of this recommendation will be initiated at the appropriate time.

- (d) Consider gradually increasing the number of passive languages required of Arabic, Chinese and other interpreters to increase interpretation service versatility.

74. The number of passive languages required of Arabic and Chinese and other interpreters is gradually increasing. Many Arabic interpreters already possess two or three passive languages, and those who do not are learning French or English. Moreover, from 1987 onwards, an examination in French became a mandatory part of the United Nations language course at Beijing. Permanent interpreters in the other language booths are also working to acquire an additional language.

VIII. CASH MANAGEMENT IN THE UNITED NATIONS AND FOUR SPECIALIZED AGENCIES (FAO, ILO, UNESCO and WHO)

75. A report on this subject (A/41/649) was submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-first session. The related comments of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination concerned were transmitted to the General Assembly in document A/41/649/Add.1. Section VIII of the JIU report set out, in addition to its conclusions, 11 recommendations addressed to Governments, to the organisations themselves and to relevant inter-agency bodies. At its forty-second session, the General Assembly took note of the two reports in its decision 42/455.

76. The United Nations has been facing a very serious financial crisis for the past three years, which has required the improvement of its methods for cash forecasts. At the same time, however, the resources available to improve certain aspects of cash management, such as computerisation, have been extremely limited because of the financial crisis. The implementation of the recommendations of JIU should therefore be seen in the light of this situation.

Recommendation 1: The Governments that have met all their financial obligations concerning the payment of contributions should benefit from any surpluses to be credited to them, proportionate to the scale of contributions and in accordance with the timing of their payment during the previous budgetary period.

77. During the bienniums 1980-1981, 1982-1983 and 1984-1985, the General Assembly suspended regulations 4.3, 4.4 and 5.2 (d) of the United Nations Financial Regulations concerning the surrender of the balance of biennial appropriations. A similar decision is expected for the biennium 1986-1987. While various proposals have been discussed to ensure timely payment of assessed contributions on the part of Member States, no specific steps have been taken to change the current Financial Regulations relating to the payment of contributions or to the disposition of surpluses.

Recommendation 2: All Governments should inform the treasuries concerned in advance about the time, amount and method of forthcoming payments.

78. While this recommendation is addressed to Governments, the United Nations fully concurs with it, since accurate information on the time, amount and method of forthcoming payments is an essential element of reliable cash flow forecasts. The Organisation regularly seeks this information and can report that a good number of Governments are quite helpful in providing it.

Recommendation 3: Organizations should, independently or in collaboration with their bankers, develop a programme to produce the automated bank reconciliation of their major bank accounts.

79. The United Nations has implemented a programme of automated bank reconciliation of its major bank accounts.



Recommendation 4: Organizations should, more frequently, review their bank accounts systematically so as to close inactive accounts.

80. The United Nations has implemented this recommendation by means of a review carried out once a year. In this respect, communications are sent to fund managers to verify whether accounts should be maintained or should be closed.

Recommendation 7: Organizations should attempt to improve their ability to forecast their cash position.

81. The United Nations has improved its system of gathering information for projecting cash flow. Computerized cash flow forecasts based on an analysis of expenditure patterns, contribution patterns and projection of future disbursements are prepared monthly.

Recommendation 8: The Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Financial and Budgetary Questions) should take the initiative to establish a standardized method of calculation of investment returns in order to make information on the investment performance of the organizations comparable.

82. The Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (FB) discussed at its sixty-sixth session (30 March-3 April 1987) the possibility of adopting a standard method of calculation of investment returns, as recommended by JIU. The members of the Committee, however, felt that this step would have very little practical value.

Recommendation 9: Treasuries should have appropriate technical equipment in accordance with their specific needs. The United Nations (Headquarters and Geneva Office) is particularly affected and should take appropriate measures promptly. This matter should be given high priority by administrations when programme budgets are prepared.

83. Owing to the financial difficulties, the United Nations could implement only minimally the recommendation of JIU.

Recommendation 10: Every organization should develop a fully computerized treasury information system to be used in an interactive and on-line manner.

84. The United Nations has begun the development of a computerized treasury information system on an experimental basis. Before this system can become fully operational, it will be essential to integrate it into a wider information system for financial data, the feasibility of which is still under review.

Recommendation 11: The centralization of cash management should not be considered for the time being.

85. The United Nations concurs with this recommendation. Inter-agency consultations and co-operation on cash management, however, are constantly being carried out, particularly in CCAO (FB).

**IX. THE LOCATION OF UNITED NATIONS INFORMATION CENTRES**

86. A report on this subject was submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-first session (A/41/120). A related document provided the Secretary-General's initial comments on the steps taken by the Department of Public Information in implementing the JIU recommendations (A/41/120/Add.1).

87. The report of JIU dealt with the important role of the information centres, some aspects of their organisation, financial aspects and certain considerations relating to the location of new centres. In the latter connection the report set out proposals on factors that should be weighed in making an assessment of whether a new centre should be established or not as well as criteria that should be met before it is agreed that a new centre come into being. The Inspector recommended the adoption by the General Assembly of these proposals and criteria.

88. In order to ensure that the funds allocated to the information centres meet their basic requirements and to correct any imbalances that might exist in the distribution of budgetary resources to them, the Department of Public Information has conducted a global review of centres, their staffing and financial resources. This was done in conjunction with the issuance of the centres' budget allocations and also as part of the post reduction exercise and of the Department's structural reorganisation plans. In this connection, new regional desks have been established in the Department's headquarters services to the information centre network to improve services and to monitor more effectively the activities of the centres in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas. These units will also be responsible for analysing and evaluating the individual centres' output and impact as the local agent of the Department of Public Information for programme delivery in the respective regions.

89. The Department has used the factors mentioned in paragraph 33 of the JIU report - the political, the pragmatic and the 1982 guidelines - in considering several proposals for the establishment of information centres. A United Nations information centre is usually established at the request of a Member State that has an interest in hosting a centre. It is also established at the request of the General Assembly with the consent of the Member State concerned. On the pragmatic side, a new centre's establishment is predicated upon an agreement with the host Government concerning the facilities and services it can provide for the centre, including office premises, transport, communications and local staff (General Assembly resolution 1405 (XIV) of 1 December 1959). Another pragmatic consideration that is also taken into account is the availability of resources at the United Nations.

90. To improve the telecommunications facility between Headquarters and the information centres, the Department of Public Information in 1987 introduced electronic mail equipment to some 20 centres. It is already operational at a number of centres, providing efficient administrative and operational contacts between Headquarters and the centres, while greatly facilitating the delivery to the latter of timely information programmes and materials.

91. Insufficient funds, particularly for travel and local language adaptation of information material, still limit many centres' outreach beyond the borders of the host countries. This is largely due to the Organisation's continuing financial crisis, which reduces budget allocations to the centres.

92. As a result, difficulty continues to exist for United Nations information centres with multiple jurisdictions in adequately covering the information needs of non-host countries. The Department of Public Information has initiated negotiations with the UNDP Administration, which maintains field offices in some 120 Member States and territories, to pool UNDP/Department of Public Information resources and services in an effort to provide better information services to those countries where United Nations information centres do not operate. The operational arrangements under discussion envisage the involvement of UNDP offices in the effort to increase contacts with the centres and with the local media and the public at large, reinforced by information support from the Department and, where possible, by resource allocation. As the Inspector has suggested, the following factors are taken into account when making practical arrangements: the level of literacy, the state of communications, the availability of funds and personnel, and the degree of governmental assistance.

93. Further to assess the viability of the existing centres, the Department of Public Information organized in the field a combined regional meeting of centre directors from Africa and Asia in 1987 and another combined regional meeting of United Nations information centres directors from Europe and North America early in 1988.

94. It should be emphasized, however, that adequate and effective information centre coverage, especially of those non-host countries under their jurisdictions, continues to suffer from a shortage of operational funds, the recruitment freeze, the post reduction and in some cases the economic difficulties of the host Governments.

#### Notes

1/ See Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 49 (A/41/49), para. 21.