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QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION

JOINT INSPECTION UNIT

Publications policy and practice in the United Nations system

Comments of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly the comments of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Publications policy and practice in the United Nations system" (A/39/239).

ANNEX

Comments of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination

Introduction

1. The report of the Joint Inspection Unit on publications policy and practice in the United Nations system may be seen in the context of the Unit's study and formulation of recommendations in recent years on language services, and on documentation and publication questions. One might recall the so-called Macy report on recurrent publications of the United Nations (JIU/REP/71/8); the report on the implications of additional languages in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/77/5); the report entitled "Evaluation of the translation process in the United Nations system" (JIU/REP/80/7); and finally "Control and limitation of documentation in the United Nations system" (JIU/REP/80/12).
2. Its timeliness is evident from the interest shown recently by the Committee on Conferences in the subject of recurrent publications. The topic was discussed at the 1983 substantive session of the Committee, on the basis of a document circulated as A/AC.172/87/Add.1, as a result of which the Committee recommended to the General Assembly the adoption of the provisions that appear in paragraphs 14 to 17 of resolution 38/32 E of 25 November 1983. These basically invite reviews by appropriate entities of the recurrent publications issued under their authority, with a view to identifying and discontinuing those that no longer serve a useful purpose.
3. For its 1984 substantive session, the Committee on Conferences was provided with a revised and updated list of recurrent publications of all departments and offices of the United Nations (A/AC.172/87/Add.1/Rev.1) and at its request information is currently being gathered from author departments about the period that elapses between the time the data needed for publications becomes available and its preparation for publication in final form. When supplementary information is gathered about the period required for editing, translating, typing and reproducing these manuscripts, it should be possible to establish whether, as the Committee wondered, there is an undue delay involved in the issuance of recurrent publications.
4. At the same time, the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination had before it at its 1984 session a report entitled "Documents dissemination system", prepared at its request to answer the question: Does the distribution system of the United Nations provide the mechanism by which studies and reports can effectively reach the "target users" for whom, as defined in the programme budget, they are intended? It emerges from this study as well that renewed interest is being shown at different stages of the programme planning, budgeting and evaluation process as regards publications.
5. It is understood that, in accordance with established practice, the executive heads of most organizations of the United Nations system will provide their governing bodies with observations on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection

Unit contained in the report in question.* The comments herein are made on this assumption.

6. That the general reaction to the report was positive and the recommendations contained therein were considered sound and useful will be seen from the following indicative excerpts of communications from representatives of specialized agencies:

"The report makes a good attempt to identify many of the major problems of publishing in the system. It is stimulating and makes a positive contribution." (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO))

"The report is one of the most serious, balanced, constructive and complete studies of the topic of publications in the system. One of its major qualities is its examination of the activities of institutions that are by their nature comparable. It is evident from the report that long-standing problems of policy and practice experienced at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) are common to all the agencies of the system - which is at once encouraging, since UNESCO is not alone in its predicament, and at the same time distressing, in that it appears that these difficulties are inherent in the workings of an international organization." (UNESCO)

"The concerns expressed by the Inspectors relate to matters that either have been or are currently receiving considerable attention in the World Health Organization (WHO). These include concerns about the kind and amount of information that is needed at different levels in countries; about which levels the organization should attempt to address directly; and about problems of quality control, distribution, marketability and penetration of publications." (WHO)

"The ideas contained in the report are most interesting and we shall profit from them for our particular requirements, bearing in mind the size of the Secretariat of the Universal Postal Union (UPU) and the specialized audience to which its publications are addressed." (UPU)

"The report is excellent and goes into the subject in depth. It is considered of great value to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO)'s publications programme and policy. WMO is at present considering the implementation of its relevant recommendations." (WMO)

"The report provides a useful insight into the problems that arise in connection with publications and how they are solved in the organizations of the system. The solutions suggested in the report have been noted with interest. One measure that deserves further attention is the adaptation of the print run of each publication to the likely demand, which would presumably effect economies." (International Maritime Organization (IMO))

* The comments of the Secretary-General on the recommendations of the Inspectors as they may apply in the United Nations are contained in document A/39/239/Add.1.

7. On the other hand, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) had difficulties with one aspect of the report:

"The report provides a broad overview of the publications scene in the system, containing a great deal of interesting information. In many cases, however, the information given is not complete enough to allow for a direct comparison and interrelation of publication policies and practices in the various international organizations. On the other hand, publications activities are geared to the specific nature and objectives of each organization and their management should best be left to the responsible officials within the individual agencies. Some of the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report have therefore only marginal value for the Agency."

8. The comments contained herein are taken from the same communications from the organizations of the United Nations system, as they relate to individual recommendations contained in the report.

Specific comments

Recommendation 1: The approach to sales and free distribution

1.1 Organizations must make every effort to gauge the extent to which publications they distribute free are having a positive impact on their readers (110).*

9. Practically all the publications of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) stem from research and technical information projects approved by the ILO governing body under its review of biennial regular programme and budget proposals. There is, however, a considerable measure of agreement among ILO constituents - Governments, employers and workers - on the subjects subsequently covered by ILO publications. Furthermore, ILO's distribution policy is to make publications available as widely as possible while taking due precautions to avoid waste. This is done in two main ways: (a) by assessing the market potential of each manuscript before determining print runs; and (b) by taking steps to limit the number of copies for free distribution according to the characteristics of each publication and of the target readerships and production costs involved. The impact of free distribution is more difficult to assess than the effect on the market, mainly because the major part of the copies distributed free of charge are supplied as a service to the Governments of member States and to central national employers' and workers' organizations, which may use ILO publications for reference or other purposes over a very long time; a publication issued, let us say, in 1984 may not have its desired impact on policy-planners, practitioners and other users immediately but several years after publication.

* Numbers in parentheses refer to the paragraph numbers in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU/REP/84/5) as amended in the text circulated under cover of a note by the Secretary-General (A/39/239).

10. At the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, free distribution is regulated by Conference decisions on free quotas to Governments, the divisions' use of programme copies and the copies sent to the network of depository libraries. Attempts to reduce the free distribution, in particular to Governments, have failed in the past.

11. The United Nations distributes its publications free of charge to recipients in categories established by the Publications Board. Author departments maintain their own lists and are responsible for keeping them up to date. Some departments have begun to review their lists with the aid of cards that readers are asked to complete and return to indicate at least their continued interest in receiving the publications.

1.2 At the same time a more positive approach to sales is necessary, which would make organizations more alive to the need to produce publishable and marketable material (133 (1), 110).

12. ILO publications are not generated with the specific aim of meeting market demand but rather to facilitate objective study and analysis, as well as to spread knowledge and stimulate discussion of the major social and economic problems and trends in the different countries of the world. The sale of publications is only one among several forms of dissemination carried out by virtue of Article 10 of the Constitution, which gives ILO the mandate "to edit and issue ... publications dealing with problems of industry and employment of international interest". However, this mandate is not incompatible with the production of publishable and marketable material and, indeed, all manuscripts prepared for publication are examined in terms of their publishability and sales potential in accordance with criteria known to the originating programmes, which are responsible for the substantive quality of their output and for ensuring that the needs of the target readership of particular manuscripts in preparation are taken into account. ILO's "studies" (that is, the fully edited texts of broad-based, more general publications), as well as its statistical publications, periodicals and many of its departmental monographs, may be expected to have good sales potential.

13. A more positive approach to sales is currently being taken in the World Health Organization, while the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization remarks on the apparent contradiction between the requirement to produce publications that sell, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the mandate to promote the dissemination of information on UNESCO's activities - if necessary at the expense of commercial considerations. UNESCO notes that in any case the United Nations system does not view profit as the primary objective but rather as a means of reducing costs and of obtaining resources for reinvestment in publishing activities.

14. The International Maritime Organization agrees with the view expressed in the report that publications activities should not be based primarily on the profit motive but should rather seek to make available to the international community on as wide a scale as possible all useful material that results from the Organization's work. IMO publishes texts and offers them for sale primarily to make their contents known rather than to raise revenue. Even so, IMO uses certain

measures to help to increase sales revenue, including market surveys, the control of free distribution, effective promotion activities and enforcement of copyright restrictions to prevent unauthorized reproduction.

15. At the United Nations too sales profits are considered less important than the widest possible dissemination of information. Possible measures to bring about an increase in sales revenues are described in the Secretary-General's comments on the report under review. Some would involve additional resources being made available to the Sales Section (New York) and the Sales Unit (Geneva); others would require the active concern of author departments with, for example, promotional activities for their publications.

1.3 A publications programme must have coherence and reflect the organizations' mandates. Publications boards/committees should satisfy themselves that proposed programmes do not leave uncovered any category of readership or subject matter (57).

16. In ILO, the basic programming mechanism for publications is the programme budgeting system. The biennial programme and budget of the organization, as approved by the governing body and the International Labour Conference, reflects the decisions taken by these bodies not only on the programme of recurrent publications but also on the research and technical information projects from which individual non-recurrent publications may emerge. At the implementation stage, all proposed publications are reviewed by the originating programmes and the publication services with the aim of ensuring adherence to ILO publications policy and the general criteria governing the selection of material for publication, which includes the avoidance of overlapping publications, the filling of any conspicuous gaps in the treatment of subject-matter within ILO's competence and the preparation of revised editions or companion volumes of "best-selling" publications. The coherence of the publications programme results from that of the technical activities of the organization.

17. FAO has a Publications Committee that deals less with substantive publishing problems than with broad policy and budgetary matters. Its terms of reference indicate that the Publications Committee should consider "the appropriateness of subject-matter of publications ... [and] the validity of proposals for the issue of publications" but, for lack of time, reading manuscripts and making evaluations of contents and target audiences are left to originating services. The Publications Division is concerned mainly with improving the editorial aspects of publications, translating, printing and distributing them.

18. UNESCO's publications list corresponds to its programme objectives, and could conceivably be improved by being developed in the context of a coherent editorial policy.

19. The Publications Committee of the International Atomic Energy Agency has recently had an increase in powers and an additional such increase should perhaps be studied in the light of this recommendation.

20. At the United Nations, the Publications Board performs a review function devoted to technical and financial considerations and satisfies itself as to the legislative authority of publications and their adherence to regulations governing documentation. Responsibility for substance rests with author departments, while the programme planning, budgeting and evaluation machinery of the Organization is concerned with programme relevance and coherence.

21. Whatever mechanism is used, one wonders if it would ever prove possible not to "leave uncovered any category of readership or subject matter".

1.4 Governing bodies should require their publications boards/committees, before approval of any publication, to require information on the readership to which it is directed and on the proposed marketing concept and sales plan (lll).

22. This recommendation is in line with ILO internal practice, which requires originating programmes to orient the preparation of manuscripts for publication towards well-defined general and/or specialized target readerships and which places special emphasis on the need for careful assessment by the publication services of the topicality, quality, sales potential and production costs of manuscripts proposed for issue.

23. The World Health Organization considers it important to promote its publications for sales purposes and for free requests. The greatest attention is paid to review journals, which are the main promotion tool for WHO publications. The best method of informing the potential readership of technical publications has been found to be good reviews in journals dealing mainly with the field of interest - which method is fairly inexpensive. The second most important tool is direct mailing, which requires considerably more manpower and other resources.

24. The United Nations finds that implementing this recommendation would require identification of the target readership by the author department, which would then, at an early stage, collaborate with sales officials in working out an appropriate marketing and sales strategy.

1.5 When a manuscript has been prepared, before its approval for issuance, satisfaction of the criteria on which its approval was based should be verified (lll).

25. At ILO all manuscripts proposed by technical units for publication are subject to substantive and quality clearance by the programme managers concerned before they can be transmitted for editorial and other action in respect of their publication.

26. The United Nations understands the intended criteria to be targeted readership and an agreed marketing concept and sales plan and considers that the best means of proceeding would be to require certification by the head of the author department that the text submitted for publication indeed satisfied the criteria set forth in the relevant standing instruction.

1.6 Governing bodies should, at intervals of two to three years, test the validity of the grounds for issuance of publications to ensure that they are meeting the test of publishability. The reviews should be based on information provided by the secretariat on the extent to which the intended readers were reached and the proportion of printed copies that were distributed free or sold (111).

27. The governing body of ILO conducted an in-depth review of ILO's publication and document services in 1977. Apart from that in-depth review, which can be repeated at any time at the request of the governing body, it proceeds regularly to the detailed review of programme and budget proposals for the following biennium and of the implementation of the activities approved in the current biennium; it also receives at each session a report on ILO publications and documents issued since the preceding session and on agreements signed with commercial and non-profit-making publishers for the publication of original works, translations, reprints and microform editions. Information of the kind suggested by the Joint Inspection Unit can be made available at any time to the governing body, on request.

28. The United Nations believes that it could provide the programme planning, budgeting and evaluation organs with information on the established distribution pattern and the sales record of publications, but questions whether saleability should alone or primarily determine the value of its publications.

1.7 The focus and aim of a publication should be sharp: it should have a clear developmental or other objective in view (112) and be directed to a specific and identifiable readership (55).

29. This recommendation is in line with ILO's aims and practice.

30. The World Health Organization reports that it carefully considers defining the intended readership for its publications and ensuring that the readership is reached.

1.8 Publications in respect of which sales are not a viable proposition should be issued in the form of documents rather than books, so as to effect a saving in production and distribution costs (112).

31. ILO considers that the issue of certain manuscripts as documents for free distribution rather than as sales publications would not lead to significant savings in production and distribution costs unless the print runs of such documents were severely limited. Even if a document is sold in relatively few copies, distribution by sale, at least for a limited number of copies, should be encouraged rather than discouraged as a means of testing the reaction of the market, inviting attention to the fact that each type of published material has a given value and allowing a modest return on the investment in production and distribution costs.

32. This recommendation is said by WHO to correspond to its practice. It would not be workable for the United Nations, however, for the reasons given in A/39/239/Add.1 (paras. 21 to 26).

33. The experience of IMO suggests that a simple reduction in quantity may not automatically result in an improvement in the quantity of the material published. Moreover the issue of texts in document form not only reduces revenues, but also increases the volume of documentation, at a time when many governing bodies are strongly pressing for reductions in the volume of documentation.

1.9 Distribution lists should be consolidated and computerized to facilitate their use, to eliminate duplication, to permit easier collaboration among organizations (74) and to assist in planning and rationalizing distribution methods (75).

34. ILO has consolidated into a central computerized mailing list most of the data relating to normal recipients of ILO publications and documents. Although exchanges of mailing lists among organizations may be only marginally useful to ILO, they are not neglected, particularly for promotional purposes. However, the practice of renting mailing lists from specialized firms can be a better method of reaching specialized target readerships.

35. All the distribution lists at FAO are computerized and administered by its IBM Series I. Computerization has eliminated all duplicates and consolidated distribution lists, thus rationalizing distribution.

36. WHO has developed a programme of computerization of addresses with analysis by category, country, etc., which allows a more targeted distribution of publications either free or for sale. Furthermore, nearly 20,000 addresses are already quoted for promotional purposes and they will be used for forthcoming publications. WHO already has a programme of exchanges with the United Nations and other agencies in order to widen the audience of its publications when one of the organizations has a mailing list for the subject.

37. WIPO is just completing the computerization of its distribution.

38. IAEA's mailing lists were consolidated and computerized in 1969/1970. Since then the lists have facilitated the determination of print runs of documents and other material. Plans are under way for improvements in the selection and retrieval possibilities as well as for links to stock control and invoicing procedures for publications.

39. At the United Nations, computerization of distribution lists is under way at the New York and Geneva offices and a central inventory of all the mailing lists is to be introduced. At ECLA a computer-based distribution system has been set up, which contains over 10,000 names and addresses classified according to the interests of recipients.

1.10 More should be done to encourage sales in the developing world, not only because of the financial returns to be expected but also because of the universality of the United Nations system (85).

40. The improvement of dissemination of ILO publications and documents in developing countries is subject to a continuing effort. Much is achieved through ILO external offices, individual booksellers and a number of commercial publishers interested in issuing reprints for the local market, as well as through the policy

of allowing ILO offices to sell ILO material in local currency at especially favourable rates. It is worth noting that decentralized field units that issue publications in Asia, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean sell them at deliberately low prices. However, care must always be taken not to underprice publications in view of the effect this may have on the booksellers and of the need to maintain reasonable levels of income with which to finance the activities of the ILO publications revolving fund, which receives only up to 75 per cent of the income from sales and royalties and has to finance most sales promotion and reprinting operations, as well as a significant number of sales staff at headquarters and at selected external offices.

41. Sales of FAO publications in 12 countries (Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America) accounted for 75 per cent of its total sales in 1983. Buyers in developing countries may pay in non-convertible currencies, through sales agents or representatives' offices. Moreover, a special discount in addition to the usual commercial discount is granted to all clients in developing countries, however the order is placed.

42. Sixty per cent of UNESCO's sales are made in four countries (in descending order of sales: France, the United States, Belgium, the United Kingdom), and 70 per cent in 12 countries (the four named and Spain, the Federal Republic of Germany, Switzerland, Australia, Canada, Italy, the Netherlands and Japan). While the imbalance ought to be corrected, account should be taken of the importance of free distribution in developing countries. The variations in purchasing power of different currencies should also be kept in mind, particularly for non-convertible currencies. Finally, the most specialized publications have a limited public in any case.

43. While figures for 1983 show that practically 80 per cent of WHO's sales were made in developed countries, the results achieved in the South-East Asia and Pacific regions were nevertheless very encouraging. In addition to the widely disseminated information on special terms for all developing countries, for which it has a different level of prices, WHO has recently developed a scheme for the sale of its publications in the South-East Asia region. With the help of two people paid by the revolving sales fund to cope with the increased work on promotion, WHO is issuing a catalogue for the region listing all the publications with the Indian rupee price, which represents 65 per cent of the normal price expressed in Swiss francs. Discounts of 25 per cent may be obtained on this special price and all the countries in the region will obtain the same type of reduced price.

44. IAEA maintains one set of prices for its publications, valid for all sales areas. Sales occur primarily in the developed countries, since the market for Agency publications is much more substantial there. IAEA publications are distributed through a network of exclusive and non-exclusive distributors, and direct sales to clients also play an important role. The Agency grants discounts of between 15 and 60 per cent.

45. The United Nations relies primarily on free distribution to reach its targeted readers in the developing world, although some offices, such as UNIDO, maintain a relatively high level of sales there by a combination of publications intended specifically for that audience, coupled with appropriately low prices. It was felt by the United Nations that a review of its pricing policy should probably be undertaken, with a view to improving and rationalizing it.

Recommendation 2: Quality control and the role of the director of publications

2.1 Efforts to improve the quality of published material need to be taken closer to the unit level of operation (133 (2)), i.e. to the working level of manuscript preparation (50 bis).

46. The improvements sought in ILO arise at three main stages: (a) the design of each project, when it is important to define clearly the aims and focus of each ensuing manuscript, the style of treatment and the target readership; (b) the technical review stage, when the chief of department concerned must assess the merits of each manuscript and decide whether to recommend it for publication; and (c) the editing and production stage, at which the quality, publishability and sales potential of a manuscript will be assessed and appropriate action taken to improve the lasting usefulness of each volume.

47. The Inspectors note that UNESCO is unique in having a publications unit in each programme sector, the heads of which meet with the Director of the UNESCO Press in a Consultative Committee on Publications. That Committee's mandate includes studying ways of improving the quality of publications.

48. At IAEA, the detailed editing of all sale publications helps to ensure quality of structure and presentation and control of detail. Where the material is unsuitable or unready for publication in some respect, detailed discussions are held between editors and authors to solve the problem. Moreover, the practice that seems to be gaining some currency, of requesting editorial advice at an early stage of preparation, is also of great value in this regard.

49. In full agreement with this recommendation, the United Nations puts forward various suggestions for its implementation, including the appointment of better drafters, the placement of editors within substantive departments to work with authors from the inception of a publication to improve its organization and style; and the assumption of responsibility by heads of department for the quality of publications.

2.2 The role of the director of publications should be re-examined; he should have the authority to ensure that material being published meets standards of acceptability (or publishability) (114) in the light of the readerships to which it is addressed (133 (2)).

50. ILO considers it unnecessary to establish a post for a director of publications, since chiefs of technical departments have the authority to decide on the issue of publications other than centrally issued major publications such as studies, manuals and periodicals, which are published under the responsibility of its Publications Branch. The editorial services play an important role in the process of evaluation, selection and improvement of manuscripts for publication.

51. UNESCO agrees that the director of publications should be a professional, and preferably someone from the publishing trade. Moreover professionalism is a prerequisite for the smooth functioning of publications services at all levels. In addition, UNESCO concurs with the view that the director of publications should have the authority to take decisions on the publishability of manuscripts. As it is, however, the publications services have no control over the choice of subjects or authors, or the quality of the texts presented for publication.

52. In WHO quality control is exercised by the Office of Publications, while activities requiring an experience of commercial publishing are largely the responsibility of the Distribution and Sales Unit, which includes staff members with such experience.

53. IMO shares the views expressed by the Inspectors regarding the need to give the necessary authority and independence of action to the director of publications.

54. WIPO doubts whether this recommendation is relevant to all organizations regardless of size of staff and internal administrative structure.

55. The United Nations has no post with functions equivalent to those envisaged for a director of publications, involving, inter alia, judgement on the substance of proposed publications. It would not appear to be a workable proposal for the United Nations in view of the wide range of subjects dealt with by the Organization as well as its geographically and organizationally decentralized structure. Reliance on publications committees located in author departments and offices would be more workable.

2.3 The director of publications should chair an editorial sub-committee that would assist him to that end by, inter alia:

- (a) Advising those about to prepare texts how best to approach their topics and achieve the readership aims established;
- (b) Advising on the acceptability of texts and arranging, in collaboration with the authors, for peer review;
- (c) Identifying action necessary on individual texts (113).

56. These tasks are already performed in ILO as a result of consultations between editorial units and authors; panels of readers exist in certain departments and also to evaluate manuscripts on which there are divergent views.

57. FAO used to submit manuscripts to at least three external peer reviewers. Consideration is being given to reintroducing the practice, particularly for major FAO publications. The creation of an editorial sub-committee under the Publications Committee would, it was felt, help considerably to achieve more coherent and better publications programmes.

58. WIPO doubts whether this recommendation is relevant to all organizations regardless of size of staff and internal administrative structure.

59. There is a well-established system of quality control at IAEA, in which the Division of Publications and the Publications Committee play very strong roles. The Publications Committee does have the responsibility to review individual manuscripts and the right not to grant approval for publication when necessary. In addition to making policy recommendations, the main task of the Agency's Publications Committee is to examine whatever is submitted for publication, after it has been approved in principle by the Director and Deputy Director-General of the scientific or technical area concerned.

60. In the view of the United Nations, the proposed functions could best be carried out by the publications committees or review machinery in author departments, as is done currently by UNIDO, for instance.

2.4 Departments or units seeking permission to produce publications should be required to state and justify a specific period of time within which each publication must be produced and distributed or sold (53).

61. At ILO the time taken to complete the preparatory work on a manuscript is generally longer and less predictable than the time needed for editorial and production purposes.

62. WHO agrees that delay in publication reduces impact, and units submitting texts for publication are, as the Inspectors recommended, required to state the target publication date (though this is often unrealistic).

63. IAEA points out that it is difficult to predict the time that will be needed to produce a publication. Much depends on the quality of the manuscript, which is not always evident until much of the editing has been completed. Moreover, unpredictable delays in presentation and printing can occur as a result of work on other publications with priority. The Agency considers six months the target period for issuing a publication of 500 pages and, considering the experience of other organizations, its record is exemplary.

64. Author departments at the United Nations have not been required to state and justify a time within which a publication must be produced and distributed or sold. Since priority is in most cases given to the production of meeting documentation, it would in any case be very difficult under the present arrangements to meet such deadlines. It is also felt that timely issuance can be, but need not always be, important for a publication, depending on its contents and format.

2.5 If that period does not permit "in-house" production, the services of a commercial publisher should be sought to have the publication appear in time (53).

65. ILO seeks external publishers for the publication of original works which would not be published directly by it, as well as for the production of translated editions and reprints.

66. UNESCO's considerable experience of collaboration with commercial publishers enables it to state that production delays are as significant for the latter as for organizations of the United Nations system.

67. WHO has found that having recourse to outside publishers can also be a lengthy process because it takes time to find and persuade a suitable publisher, who is in any case likely to have his own deadline problems and priorities.

68. The United Nations does not generally use external publication for purposes of timeliness but rather to reach more readers, in more languages, sometimes with less "publishable" material than would be possible for its own sales list.

2.6 The rules on citing staff member-authors of publications by name should be made more flexible. The names of staff should be published in the case of publications which call for special creative, scientific or literary effort (54).

69. ILO has retained the anonymity rule mainly for official documents, and acknowledges authorship in most of its publications.

70. WHO indicates staff authorship in its publications. The United Nations, like almost all United Nations bodies, does not, although the Publications Board is keeping the question under review.

2.7 United Nations system publishing should take full advantage of developments in printing technology such as the new techniques for rapid printing and transfer of texts and their economical storage made possible by advanced computer and electronic systems (69).

71. ILO introduced text-processing as one of several means of improving the presentation of internally processed publications and documents and of reducing contractual printing expenditure. Every opportunity is taken to benefit from advanced technologies, particularly when they result in lower levels of expenditure.

72. WIPO has introduced modern printing techniques (including photocomposition from word-processor input and from computer input, and the use of laser printing and optical character recognition) for its statutory and periodical publications.

73. For IAEA, the process recommended by the Inspectors of using camera-ready copy as an economical means of producing documents and publications was introduced some 20 years ago and has saved the Agency a considerable amount over the years. The Agency has taken the first step in the use of new technologies by installing a laser printer. The introduction of further new equipment would involve a considerable investment in the period 1985-1987, on which a detailed study of requirements would be in order, with the participation of staff from the publishing, printing and computer areas.

74. The introduction of advanced printing technology is proceeding at all main office locations of the United Nations, as resources and local conditions permit, and involving computer and data-processing systems as well as word-processing and photocomposition capacity. Eventually an electronic communications link is anticipated to permit the transmission of documents and graphic material among main office locations.

Recommendation 3: Management information

3.1 It is essential that statistical and other information on the direct and indirect costs of publications and on the effectiveness of publications activities should be available (133 (3)).

75. WHO reports that it already has available part of the management information material mentioned and completion of the current computerization of distribution and sales activities will provide a much wider range of useful management information.

76. This recommendation is generally implemented in IMO, where all operations concerning publications are carried out through an autonomous printing fund, in which costs of production, including printing, equipment, supplies and recruitment of temporary staff, are clearly identified along with revenue. This facilitates budgetary control and makes possible a better assessment of the cost-effectiveness of the publishing programme.

77. IAEA is commended by the Inspectors for the cost-accounting system it established in 1979, which includes all information on individual projects from the printing stage on, with the exception of typesetting, presentation, editing and distribution.

78. The United Nations notes that in computing direct and indirect costs, no distinction has been made between the work that would have had to be done in fulfilment of programme goals, even were it not to be the subject of a publication, and work directed exclusively to the production of a publication. The isolation of direct printing costs will be greatly facilitated by the computerization of record-keeping and other operations in the reproduction, printing and distribution areas of United Nations publishing offices.

3.2 All organizations that have not already done so should institute appropriate accounting systems to enable them to distinguish between the direct costs of publications and those of documents (116).

79. ILO states that it is conscious of the desirability of instituting some form of cost accounting for internally processed documents and publications and reports that a technical unit has been assigned to look into the matter. It has always been hesitant, however, to add non-productive staff for cost accounting instead of increasing productive staff wherever possible. Its basic aim is to try to make the office more cost-conscious.

80. IAEA produced some 90 per cent of its books on internal facilities in 1981, as compared with the 50 per cent average for the system as a whole. The production costs of publications versus documents are identifiable by the Agency (see para. 77).

81. The computerized record keeping system to be installed in the reproduction and printing areas of the United Nations will permit the calling up of detailed cost information. There remains the problem of how to deal for accounting purposes with documents being issued simultaneously or subsequently as publications.

3.3 Attention is drawn to the desirability of strict control of stocks of publications and of energetic clearance of surplus stock, by sale for pulping, if necessary (104).

82. In application of stock reduction measures ILO proceeds in three main ways: (a) selling excess stock to reprint publishers, together with the reprinting rights; (b) donations to library and research institutions particularly in developing countries, provided that the shipment costs are low; (c) sale for pulping. Furthermore, close attention is paid to the review and determination of print runs in order to avoid surplus stock after a two- to three-year period.

83. FAO has sold some quantities of ISBN documents (which are produced in selected languages and sold with ISBN identification) and miscellaneous material as remainders in recent years. Overstocking in FAO results from the print runs requested by originating units "for programme use" not being disposed of finally. Reinforcing controls on the publications programme could achieve substantial savings here, particularly in printing and storage costs.

84. WIPO's new publications computer system will improve stock control for all publications.

85. IAEA reduces its stock of publications annually, taking into consideration the sales movements of each publication. The collection of scrap paper for pulping is a function of UNIDO's Building Management Services and proceeds, if any, are not turned over to the Agency. The measures recommended for avoiding overstocking and keeping an accurate annual inventory and statistics on the sales and free distribution of each title were introduced by the Agency many years ago.

86. The improved inventory control that will result from computerized record-keeping at the United Nations is expected to make possible more rational decisions on stock disposal, while storage of hard copy is projected to give way more and more to microform storage and retrieval.

3.4 Surveys for the purpose of identifying reader receptivity and needs in different countries or regions are necessary to the improved planning and execution of publications programmes (94).

87. ILO tends to agree with the views of FAO.

88. FAO considers surveys of readership a simple exercise for periodicals and annuals but for books, especially if performed for each title, it is a highly complex and expensive proposition. To identify a target audience for a given book is a rather simple exercise once an evaluation of the contents is made; it is difficult, however, to predict who the individual readers will be. The question then becomes whether readers of the book should be surveyed as the book is bought, or whether one should wait until a given number of copies have been sold, say 500 or 1,000. The industry average for the return of "comments" cards is of the order of 1 to 1.5 per cent.

89. FAO believes that readership surveys for books should be undertaken among known buyers of its publications, who could be assumed to qualify as "average readers". The results of the survey could be projected and amplified according to existing methodologies and the resulting averages accepted as functional realities. When surveys of this type are conducted on a person-to-person basis, the industry average rate of return is 4 to 5 per cent.

90. IAEA remarks that while a readership survey might be useful for publications aimed at an amorphous readership, it is not necessary for the clearly defined clientele for Agency publications.

91. The United Nations has found the use of addressed postcards in publications elicited returns from existing readers, primarily of an institutional nature. Less has been done in the way of contacting potential readers, more because of lack of funds rather than an absence of interest in doing so on the part of departments.

3.5 The information gathered by surveys of readers should be communicated to authors and author departments to assist them to address the needs identified (95).

92. The United Nations took it for granted that the results of surveys would be communicated to author departments.

Recommendation 4: Reductions in the quantity of published material (redistribution of publications resources)

4.1 Governing bodies should satisfy themselves that publications, on evidence to be produced, are being designed for specific readerships and reaching the clientele for which they are designed (120).

93. This recommendation corresponds to recommendation 1.6, as supplemented by recommendations 1.3 and 1.4 above.

4.2 Governing bodies should authorize secretariats, in the preparation of future publications budgets, to increase the proportion of funds to be allocated to quality control, marketing, promotion and distribution at the expense of a reduction in the quantity of material to be published (120).

94. While finding the recommendation well taken, ILO believes that every effort should concurrently be made to ensure that the publications produced are more saleable. It feels that this could be achieved more easily if publications departments were associated with the design of research projects at an early stage. If more resources became available, the ILO would tend to favour the strengthening of sales promotion and of editorial services aimed at better quality and higher marketability of publications.

95. It is not clear to WHO why "quality control" is mentioned in paragraph 120 (b) of the report, while it is omitted from a similar formulation in paragraph 133 (1). In any case WHO assigns high priority to quality control, given prominence in the Seventh General Programme of Work, which stresses the production and flow through countries of "valid information, relevant to national needs".

96. IMO shares the view that all efforts should be made to develop marketing and promotion activities, although it considers that that should not necessarily lead to a reduction in the number of publications produced. For example, in IMO most of the titles issued contain information that must be published and there is therefore no real possibility of reduction in numbers of publications. Where greater flexibility prevails regarding the issuance of publications, it may be useful to set targets for reducing numbers of copies, although such targets must always be flexible and allow for unforeseen developments.

97. The United Nations finds that discretionary publications, in the category of studies and reports, account for an average of only 12.5 of its external printing budget and that a reduction in such titles would not in any event automatically increase funds made available for marketing, promotion, distribution or quality-control purposes.

4.3 Governing bodies should encourage organizations to collaborate with one another, in small combinations if necessary, for specific activities in marketing, promotion and distribution (120).

98. Referring specifically to a unified computerized mailing list, ILO considers that that would probably offer few advantages, since the constituents and target audiences of the organizations of the system have quite different interests.

99. Examples of shared activities in sales and advertising are given by the United Nations in the Secretary-General's comments (A/39/239/Add.1), with the suggestion that the matter be discussed at the inter-agency level.

4.4 Governing bodies should approve no real increase in publications budgets until such time as they are assured that efforts to improve the diffusion end of the publishing activity are producing concrete results (120).

100. ILO feels that this recommendation is, in effect, linked with the reduction of documentation, and that the way to act is not to freeze publications budgets but rather to work, through the biennial programme and budget, towards the planning and design of research projects directed at matters of considerable interest for which outside demand will be such as to increase income from sales. To freeze publications budgets whilst not at the same time reducing research and technical information activities would create an impossible situation.

101. FAO generally supports the recommendation but feels it embodies the unjustifiable assumption that its publications programme is ineffective and that the point goes beyond the scope of the report. Decisions of governing bodies on publications programmes are taken in the context of their overall decisions on programmes of work and budget; they are based on programme needs and the capacity to meet these, not on considerations of publications practice.

102. There has been no real increase in the WHO publications budget since 1976, when it was considerably reduced.

103. There has been no real increase in the United Nations external printing budget since 1980-1981.

Recommendation 5: Co-operation and consultation among organizations

- 5.1 The Inter-Agency Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications (IAMLADP) should take a keener interest in publications. It should appoint a sub-committee that would explore at least the following subjects:
- (a) Collective arrangements for gathering information. This would include not only the measurement of staff costs, but also, in particular, the separation of documentation and publications printing costs;
 - (b) Inter-agency collaboration in the preparation and distribution of publications;
 - (c) The quality and appeal of publications;
 - (d) Techniques to ensure that publications are directed to the needs of target groups in developing and developed countries;
 - (e) Consultations on future publications programmes;
 - (f) New production technologies (125).

104. This recommendation was discussed at length by participants in the Inter-Agency Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications, at its session from 27 to 31 August 1984, which decided that it would be more practicable to keep the item "publications" actively under review than to establish a sub-committee on the subject. To that end, one day of its two-day interim meeting in 1985 will be devoted to publications questions, and the item will also appear on the agenda of the next regular Inter-Agency Meeting in 1986.

105. Participants in the 1985 meeting will have before them the results of a questionnaire that will seek to establish how organizations in the United Nations system define publications, documents and/or documentation and if they distinguish between them for record-keeping and other purposes.

106. Recommendations 5.2 and 4.3, which IAMLADP had also been invited to address, will be the subject of the same survey. Organizations will be asked what experience they have had in working together and sharing the costs of publications and what were the results of such co-operation; whether they would be interested in exploring the setting up of a common printing plant in Geneva, as the Inspectors suggested, or in other joint ventures; how they might collaborate with each other in specific activities like marketing, promotion and distribution, and whether substantive collaboration was viewed as feasible and/or desirable. On the basis of its discussion, the Interim Meeting will decide how to pursue the consideration of matters relating to publications within the framework of IAMLADP.

- 5.2 Organizations of the United Nations system should further examine ways of working together on and sharing the cost of financing publications (58), e.g. the Geneva-based organizations might explore the possibility of setting up a joint printing plant (68).

107. ILO notes that a proposal to set up a common United Nations printing facility was decided against in 1974. ILO has consistently taken the view that central services for printing are unlikely to offer better solutions than those available through contractors and internal workshops, namely lower costs obtained through competitive bidding, the possibility of spreading work at peak periods and guarantees of better quality and delivery terms.

108. WHO reports that there has been much co-operation with other organizations in publishing matters, notably with FAO and IAEA. Experience has shown, however, that it is usually better for one or the other organization to be the sole publisher of a text to which both have contributed rather than for the two organizations to share the editing, translation, printing and distribution functions. Agreements to this end have been signed with FAO and IAEA that cover the general principles. Ad hoc arrangements are made for books that are not covered by such agreements. The system works satisfactorily.

109. The United Nations suggests that the recommendation might appropriately be the subject of discussion initially at IAMLADP.

Recommendation 6: Public information aspects

6.1 The Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) should invite the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC) to advise on public information aspects of publications, e.g.

(a) How to make publications more effective in disseminating knowledge and carrying the message of the United Nations system to broad areas of the public;

(b) How to integrate some audio-visual productions of the Department of Public Information (DPI) with the publications of the United Nations system organizations (128).

110. ACC had no objection to this recommendation.

6.2 The Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC) should be asked to consider how information media, such as press releases, feature articles, radio and television programmes and information centres, could best be used to promote sales and to convey the salient features of United Nations family publications, in a popular manner, to as many people as possible (96).

111. The United Nations Department of Public Information has reacted to this recommendation as appears in paragraphs 87 to 90 of document A/39/239/Add.1.