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Activities of the Advisory Committee of Permanent
Representatives and Other Representatives Designated
by Members of the Commission

Report of the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission

Contents

I.   Introduction

1.   The present document covers the activities of the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission during the period June 2011 to March 2012. The Advisory Committee appointed Mr. Kazi Imtiaz Hossain, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to ESCAP as Rapporteur, with the responsibility of presenting the report to the Commission at its sixty-eighth session.

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*   The late submission of the present document to conference services is due to the need to take into account the outcome of discussions at the 341st session of ACPR, which was held on 29 March 2012.

II.   Matters calling for action by the Commission or brought to its attention

2.   The Advisory Committee recommends that the Commission endorse the proposed changes to the terms of reference of the Advisory Committee, as contained in annex I.

3.   The Advisory Committee recommends that the Commission endorse the recommendations contained in annex II as the basis for a decision on moving towards paper-lean Commission sessions, which would take effect as of the sixty-ninth session of the Commission and affect the preparations therefor.

III.   Activities of the Advisory Committee

4.   During the period under review, the Advisory Committee held five regular sessions and one special session (to review the draft strategic framework for the biennium 2014-2015). At its regular sessions, the Advisory Committee discussed, among other things, the following subjects:

(a)   *Outcome of the sixty-seventh session of the Commission*: In its review of the outcomes of the sixty-seventh session of the Commission, the Advisory Committee considered the major achievements of the session, including the adoption of 15 resolutions as well as a decision on the dates, venue and theme topic for the sixty-eighth session of the Commission.[1] The convening of the Special Body on Least Developed and Landlocked Developing Countries, in its elevated status as an integral part of the Commission session, had provided a vibrant forum for high-level exchange. The Advisory Committee commended the Executive Secretary and the secretariat for convening a successful session of the Commission, and expressed particular appreciation to the Government of Thailand for hosting the event;

(b)   *Preparations for the sixty-eighth session of the Commission*: The secretariat informed the Advisory Committee that the Economic and Social Council had endorsed Bangkok as the venue for the sixty-eighth session of the Commission. The Advisory Committee reviewed the preparations made by the secretariat and provided advice and guidance on the dates and the provisional agenda for the session as well as the work on the theme study for the session;

(c)   *Resolutions adopted by the Commission at its sixty-seventh session*: The Advisory Committee provided advice and guidance on the implementation of the resolutions adopted by the Commission;

(d)   *Review of the preparations for and outcomes of the following meetings*:

(i)   Second session of the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction;

(ii)   Second session of the Committee on Trade and Investment;

(iii)   Second session of the Committee on Environment and Development;

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[1]   See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2011, Supplement No. 19* (E/2011/39-E/ESCAP/67/23), paras. 294-298.

(iv)   Second session of the Committee on Macroeconomic Policy, Poverty Reduction and Inclusive Development;

(v)   Sixth session of the Governing Council of the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development;

(vi)   Seventh session of the Governing Council of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific;

(vii)   Seventh session of the Governing Council of the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology;

(viii)   Seventh session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Asian and Pacific Centre for Agricultural Engineering and Machinery;

(ix)   Eighth session of the Governing Council of the Centre for the Alleviation of Poverty through Sustainable Agriculture;

(x)   Second session of the Ministerial Conference on Transport;

(xi)   Asia-Pacific High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Assessment of Progress against Commitments in the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS and the Millennium Development Goals.

(e)   *Proposed calendar of ESCAP meetings and training in the period from January to December 2011*: The Advisory Committee reviewed the calendar and was provided with clarifications on the proposed items;

(f)   *Review of the draft strategic framework for the biennium 2014-2015*: The Advisory Committee provided comments and suggestions on the draft strategic framework for further consideration by the Commission.

5.   In accordance with paragraphs 15 and 16 of resolution 67/15, and as decided at its 337th and 338th sessions, the Advisory Committee established an informal working group to review its terms of reference and then to consider any possible rules of procedure for the Advisory Committee and its Informal Working Group on Draft Resolutions. At its 341st session, the Advisory Committee endorsed the report of the informal working group (annex I), and agreed to submit to the Commission for action the proposed changes to the terms of reference. The Advisory Committee also agreed to retain its current working methods, guided by the rules of procedure of the Commission.

6.   In accordance with paragraph 8 of resolution 67/15, the Advisory Committee, at its 339th session, considered a report[2] by the secretariat on moving the Commission towards paper-lean sessions that would serve "as the basis for a decision at the sixty-eighth session of the Commission which would take effect as of its sixty-ninth session and affect the preparations therefor." As recommended by the informal working group, the Advisory Committee agreed to begin piloting some of the suggestions contained in that report for moving towards paper-lean Commission sessions.

7.   The Advisory Committee was briefed regularly by the Executive Secretary on the work of the secretariat, including the outcome of her missions to ESCAP members and associate members, and her attendance at

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[2]   See annex II.

major meetings. The Executive Secretary also regularly informed the Advisory Committee of activities relating to the priority issues of the Secretary-General, particularly his five-year action agenda, and administrative and budgetary matters concerning ESCAP.

8.   In addition, the Advisory Committee was briefed on the following ongoing ESCAP initiatives and relevant events: (a) advancing statistics for development; (b) ESCAP support in disaster risk reduction; and (c) ESCAP work in transport.

Annex I

Report of the informal working group on the implementation of resolution 67/15 on the midterm review of the functioning of the conference structure of the Commission

Introduction

1.   In accordance with paragraphs 15 and 16 of resolution 67/15, and as decided at the 337th and 338th sessions of the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission, an informal working group was established to review the terms of reference of the Advisory Committee and then to consider any possible rules of procedure for the Advisory Committee and its Informal Working Group on Draft Resolutions.

2.   At its first meeting, on 15 September 2011, the informal working group elected as its Chairperson Mr. Kazi Imtiaz Hossain, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to ESCAP. The informal working group elected as Vice-Chairpersons Mr. Masatoshi Sato, Counsellor and Deputy Permanent Representative of Japan to ESCAP and Ms. Nana Yuliana, First Secretary and Alternate Permanent Representative of Indonesia to ESCAP. The informal working group held four additional meetings, which were open to all members and associate members of the Commission.

3.   The Chairperson reported on the progress of the informal working group at the 338th session of the Advisory Committee, held on 20 October 2011, and on the conclusions of the informal working group at the 341st session of the Advisory Committee, held on 29 March 2012.[a]

Review of the terms of reference of the Advisory Committee

4.   Member States engaged in a frank exchange of views regarding the terms of reference of the Advisory Committee.[b] Also taking into consideration the provisions made in resolution 67/15, they had extensive and rich deliberations on the functioning, the effectiveness and the nature and role of the Advisory Committee.

5.   Broadly, those views ranged from satisfaction with the current terms of reference to an acknowledgement that some limited amendments might be needed in order to strengthen the Advisory Committee, to transforming the Advisory Committee into a body entrusted with performing tasks on behalf of the Commission during the intersessional period.

6.   A nearly unanimous view emerged that the terms of reference of the Advisory Committee needed to be modified adequately in order to strengthen the Advisory Committee and to transform it into a truly deliberative forum able to contribute effectively to the fulfilment of the Commission's agenda.

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[a]   See ACPR/338/INF/3 and ACPR/338/RD/1/Rev.1.

[b]   Commission resolution 64/1, annex III.

7.   The informal working group also took note of paragraph 19 of resolution 67/15, in which the Commission requested the Executive Secretary to carry out further study and analysis on several issues, including "the feasibility of promoting and developing the role of the Advisory Committee in order for it to assist the Commission in carrying out and coordinating its tasks during the intersessional period," and also set out the process to be followed.

8.   Following the exchange of views, the informal working group embarked on an exercise to modify the current terms of reference. The proposed changes to the terms of reference agreed at the fourth meeting are contained in appendix I (appendix II contains the text of the original terms of reference with the amendments indicated).

Rules of procedure for the Advisory Committee and its Informal Working Group on Draft Resolutions

9.   At its 337th session, the Advisory Committee agreed that discussions on developing possible rules of procedure for the Advisory Committee should be undertaken only after the review of the terms of reference. At its 338th session, the Advisory Committee agreed to include the additional task of developing rules of procedure for its Informal Working Group on Draft Resolutions to the mandate of the informal working group upon completion of the review of the terms of reference.

10.   The informal working group, at its 5th meeting, took up a discussion on possible rules of procedure for both the Advisory Committee and its Informal Working Group on Draft Resolutions. The informal working group agreed that the current working methods, guided by the rules of procedure of the Commission, had served the Advisory Committee well in its own work and that of its Informal Working Group on Draft Resolutions and thus should be continued.

11.   In this context, the informal working group discussed various ways in which the working methods of the Advisory Committee could be improved. Referring to a report submitted to the Advisory Committee on moving towards paper-lean Commission sessions,[c] the informal working group agreed to recommend that the Advisory Committee should pilot some of the recommendations contained in that report, including conducting paper-lean meetings of the Advisory Committee and/or its working groups (such as the Informal Working Group on Draft Resolutions) through a phased approach in order to attain the goal of eliminating the use of hard copies and immediately discontinuing the delivery of hard copies of documents, which were already emailed to all members and associate members and posted simultaneously on the Advisory Committee's web page, where they could be downloaded by delegations.

12.   The informal working group agreed that member States submitting draft resolutions should endeavour to abide by the principle articulated in annex I, paragraph 5, of Commission resolution 64/1, which states:

> "Without prejudice to rule 31 of the rules of procedure of the Commission, members of the Commission intending to submit draft resolutions to the Commission are strongly encouraged to submit them to the Executive Secretary at least one month prior to

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[c]   See ACPR/339/INF/3.

the commencement of the session of the Commission in order to allow sufficient time for review by members and associate members of the Commission."

Conclusion and recommendations

13. The informal working group recommends that the Advisory Committee endorse its report and submit to the Commission for action the proposed changes to the terms of reference, as contained in appendix I.

14. The informal working group recommends that the Advisory Committee begin piloting some of the suggestions for moving towards paper-lean Commission sessions, as contained in document ACPR/339/INF/3.

Appendix I

Proposed terms of reference of the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission, as agreed at the fourth meeting of the informal working group, on 24 January 2012

The Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission shall have the following functions:

(a)   To strengthen close cooperation and consultation between the member States and the secretariat, including by providing advice and guidance to be taken into account by the Executive Secretary while undertaking activities;

(b)   To serve as a deliberative forum for substantive exchange of views and provide guidance on the formulation of the ESCAP agenda and in connection with economic and social developments that have an impact on the Asia-Pacific region;

(c)   To advise and guide the Executive Secretary in drawing up proposals for the strategic framework, programme of work and theme topics for Commission sessions consistent with the guidance provided by the Commission;

(d)   To receive, on a regular basis, information on the administrative and financial functioning of the Commission;

(e)   To advise and guide the Executive Secretary in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the Commission's programme of work and resource allocation;

(f)   To review the draft calendar of meetings prior to its submission to the Commission at its annual session;

(g)   To advise and guide the Executive Secretary on the provisional agenda for sessions of the Commission and committees subsidiary to the Commission, consistent with the need to ensure a results-oriented and focused agenda that is aligned with the developmental priorities of member States as defined by them, as well as chapter II of its rules of procedure;

(h)   To advise and guide the Executive Secretary on the identification of emerging economic and social issues and other relevant issues for incorporation into the provisional agendas and on the formulation of the annotated provisional agendas for Commission sessions;

(i)   To be informed of ESCAP collaboration and related arrangements with other international and regional organizations, in particular on long-term cooperation programmes and joint initiatives, including those to be proposed by the Executive Secretary and conducted under the aegis of the Regional Coordination Mechanism;

(j)   To carry out any other tasks entrusted to it by the Commission.

Appendix II

Original terms of reference of the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission as contained in resolution 64/1

The Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission shall have the following functions:

(a) To maintain close cooperation and consultation between the members and the secretariat of the Commission;

(b) To advise and assist the Executive Secretary in drawing up proposals for the strategic framework and programme of work, consistent with the guidance provided by the Commission;

(c) To receive on a regular basis information on the administrative and financial functioning of the Commission, and to assist and advise the Executive Secretary in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the Commission's programme of work;

(d) To review the draft calendar of meetings prior to its submission to the Commission at its annual session;

(e) To advise the Executive Secretary on the provisional agenda for sessions of the Commission and committees subsidiary to the Commission, bearing in mind the need to ensure a results-oriented and focused agenda that is aligned with the development priorities of member States, as well as chapter II of its rules of procedure;

(f) To advise the Executive Secretary on the identification of emerging economic and social issues and other relevant issues for incorporation into the provisional agendas of the Commission sessions;

(g) To assist the secretariat in the formulation of the annotated provisional agenda for each session of the Commission before it is finalized;

(h) To carry out any other tasks to be entrusted to it by the Commission.

Annex II

Report on paperless Commission sessions

Introduction

1.   This note is produced in accordance with paragraph 8 of resolution 67/15 of 25 May 2011, whereby the Commission decided "to move towards paperless Commission sessions with the possibility of electronic early delivery of all pre-session documents and communications, with fewer but higher quality documents." In this regard, the Commission requested the Executive Secretary to submit to the 339th session of the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission "a report that would serve as the basis for a decision at the sixty-eighth session of the Commission which would take effect as of its sixty-ninth session and affect the preparations therefor."

Background

2.   The Executive Secretary's report to the sixty-seventh session of the Commission on the midterm review of the functioning of the conference structure of the Commission noted the secretariat's continuous efforts since 2008 to reduce the number of pre-session documents prepared for each Commission session.[a] In this respect, the report noted, between the 2008 and 2011 sessions of the Commission the number of documents were reduced by almost half.

3.   The report also noted that member States voiced support for the following steps to be taken: (a) further streamlining the number of documents and their contents; (b) further consolidating reports; for example, committee reports could serve as background or information documents, with only the key recommendations from each committee session compiled into its own document for consideration by the Commission; (c) producing reports that are concise, direct and easy to understand, and directly related to the outcome of the meeting, containing the necessary references and links to background documents and reflecting consensus and recommendations; and (d) moving towards a paperless Commission session by ensuring that all documents are available online and that no more than two sets of documents are printed and sent to each member State, including one in the official language of its preference, and notifying member States via e-mail of the availability of the documents online.[b]

4.   The desire of the Commission to move towards paperless (or more accurately, "paper lean") sessions and reduce the amount of documentation for its meetings is in line with overall trends at the United Nations. The Sustainable United Nations (SUN), an initiative of the United Nations Environment Programme, provides support to the United Nations and other organizations to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and improve their sustainability overall. Together with ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability, SUN has produced, and is continually updating, a "Green Meeting Guide" to assist organizers and hosts in greening their meetings.

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[a]   See E/ESCAP/67/15.

[b]   Ibid.

5.   At the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Ozone Secretariat has been holding paper-lean meetings since 2008 for its Meeting of the Parties and the Open-ended Working Group of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol,[c] as well as the intergovernmental meetings of the secretariats for other international conventions.

6.   In 2003, the Economic and Social Council's Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations became the first to attempt paperless meetings at the intergovernmental level. It has been holding paperless meetings ever since. (See appendices II and III for more information.)

7.   Most recently, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management at United Nations Headquarters in New York has instituted a system whereby information about the day's agenda can be downloaded to smart phones and tablets, enabling the United Nations to potentially disseminate documents, publications and other material without the need to print them. (See appendix IV for more information.)

8.   Under the Executive Secretary's Organizational Effectiveness Initiative, launched in 2009, several measures have been undertaken by the secretariat to move towards a paperless office. These include the use of email to replace paper memorandums and other internal correspondence, online posting of secretariat-wide guidelines, the use of electronic bulletin boards to disseminate information, cutting the number of publications, with a move towards online publications, and the use of web-based meetings and/or holding meetings by other means. Later, in the context of the change management effort undertaken by the Secretary-General, various parts of the Secretariat, including ESCAP, have proposed several additional measures to reduce or eliminate the use of paper—including by mass digitizing documents, and revisiting the issue of the need to translate documents—and reduce the number and frequency of meetings.

9.   Within the ESCAP secretariat, the subprogrammes on (a) information and communications technology and disaster risk reduction and (b) trade and investment have been promoting e-governance and paperless trade, respectively, in their work programmes. Capacity-building in e-governance helps governments run their internal operations and provide public services, resulting in cost savings and efficiency gains as well as more opportunities for people to access public data and participate in policymaking. The work of the ESCAP secretariat on paperless trade enables those involved in international trade transactions to exchange information and documents in electronic form, thus reducing the need for the use of paper documents and the cost and time involved in submitting and processing such documents.

10.   Apart from the positive environmental effect of reducing the amount of paper used, the potential financial savings are worthy of further examination by the secretariat and the Commission in the light of the budget reduction exercise initiated by the Secretary-General.

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[c]   See appendix I for general considerations on going "paper lean" provided by the United Nations Office at Nairobi.

The current state of documentation[d]

11.   There are three issues identified in the resolution for the Advisory Committee to consider: (a) conducting Commission sessions without printed copies of documents ("paperless" Commission sessions); (b) the possibility of delivering documents and communications to member States through electronic means, such as posting to a web page or email; and (c) reducing the number of documents for consideration at each Commission session.

The "paperless" Commission session

12.   It must first be understood that there are no truly paperless meetings; there will always be occasions when documents are printed and used out of necessity. Thus, the objective is to encourage as little use of paper as possible, leading to "paper-lean" meetings. For the Commission to be paper lean, therefore, it would be useful to begin by taking stock of the number of documents associated with its sixty-seventh session as well as the quantities of paper used to print those documents as the starting point for discussion.

13.   There were three categories of documents prepared for the session: pre-session, in-session and post-session. Pre-session documents refer to those that are submitted to an intergovernmental body for consideration and which, with the exception of communications from member States, have a mandate (individual or standing), i.e. an expressed legislative request (a resolution or decision) from the body that it receive such material.[e] Pre-session documents can include substantive reports, organizational documents, such as the annotated provisional agenda or the organization of work of the session, and information documents. **For the sixty-seventh session of the Commission, 34 pre-session documents were prepared, including two notes verbales submitted by member States, as well as any necessary corrigenda and revisions.**

14.   In-session documents are prepared and issued during the session for the consideration of the intergovernmental body and for eventual adoption or approval. These documents are given limited distribution (printed with an "L" designation in the document symbol) and generally consist of draft resolutions, draft decisions and draft reports of the intergovernmental body.[f] **For the sixty-seventh session of the Commission, 95 in-session documents[g] were prepared, including any necessary corrigenda and revisions.**

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[d]   This note will confine itself to describing the documentation prepared for the sixty-seventh session of the Commission, and the process of delivering those documents to member States.

[e]   Definition taken from "Guidelines for secretaries of intergovernmental bodies" prepared for the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management at United Nations Headquarters.

[f]   Ibid.

[g]   For the Commission, there are also other documents that are printed during the session, such as conference bulletins and the order of the day, that would not normally be counted as in-session documents. However, the working papers used by the Commission's Working Group on Draft Resolutions and the conference room papers that contain the report of the senior officials segment are counted as in-session documents. **For the purposes of the present note, all documents prepared and printed while the Commission is convened will be considered "in-session".**

15.   Post-session documents include the final report of the session, including the texts of all resolutions and decisions adopted and a complete list of all documentation before the body – pre-session and in-session.[h] **For the sixty-seventh session of the Commission, one post-session document was prepared, including any necessary corrigenda and revisions.**

Documents prepared for the sixty-seventh session of the Commission

Type	Number
Pre-session	34
In-session	95
Post-session	1
Total	130[a]

[a]   This figure refers to the number of documents prepared in English; there were 109 prepared in French, 110 prepared in Chinese and 109 prepared in Russian as not all documents required translation.

16.   **As shown in the table above, 130 documents were issued for the sixty-seventh session. A total of 433,880 sheets of paper were used to print those 130 documents.**

"Paperless" delivery of documents and communications

17.   Currently, each pre-session document is delivered through some combination of hand delivery or courier, international and domestic mail, diplomatic pouch, fax and electronic delivery (email) to member States. Hard copies are delivered to both the embassies of member States in Bangkok (if they are represented in Thailand) and to their seat of government according to the instructions provided to the secretariat, which are updated quarterly. All members and associate members of the Commission request hard copies of documents in varying quantities with the exception of two which have requested delivery of documents by email only. Pre-session documents are also made available again during the Commission session at the documents counter near the meeting rooms.

18.   In-session documents are delivered to the delegations' pigeonholes or at the documents counter near the meeting rooms. Post-session, the final report of the Commission is distributed in the same manner as the pre-session documents.

19.   All documents are simultaneously posted to the web page for the Commission session.

20.   **The documents for the sixty-seventh session of the Commission were delivered at a cost of approximately $9,300.**

Reducing documentation

21.   The secretariat is continually reviewing its efforts to reduce the number of documents put before the Commission for its consideration, with the aim of producing fewer but more impactful documents.

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[h]   Ibid.

Conclusions and recommendations

Immediate (within the next 12 months)

22.   The secretariat is continuing its review of the mandates for the documents that are currently produced for Commission sessions, using the definition in paragraph 13 above. It is also examining further possibilities for consolidating and streamlining documents, and could consider imposing a stricter limit on the length of documents than is currently required by the General Assembly.[i]

23.   Removable or portable drives containing all of the documents could be issued for delegations attending the sixty-eighth session of the Commission.

24.   The secretariat will upgrade the conference facilities to ensure that they are equipped with the necessary technical infrastructure to support fully electronic production and delivery of meeting documents.

25.   The Commission could consider piloting paper-lean meetings with the Advisory Committee and/or its working groups (such as the Informal Working Group on Draft Resolutions) through a phased approach in order to attain the goal of eliminating the use of hard copies.

26.   Delivery of documents for Advisory Committee meetings could be discontinued immediately as they are already emailed to all members and associate members and posted simultaneously on the Advisory Committee's web page, whence they can be downloaded by delegations.

27.   Hard copies of documents could be made available on the day of the meeting only by print-on-demand rather than being distributed at the documents desk.

28.   Delegates would be encouraged to bring laptops in order to view the documents or print their own copies of the documents to bring to meetings.

29.   Member States would be requested to re-evaluate their need for hard copies of committee and Commission documents, and asked to reduce their numbers where practicable.

Medium term (two to four years)

30.   As part of the evaluation of the conference structure of the Commission and the redesign of the ESCAP website, the Advisory Committee's page could be updated to enable delegations to retrieve documents after receiving notification by the secretariat via email of their availability.

31.   Removable or portable drives containing all of the session documents could be issued for delegations attending the Commission and committees.

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[i]   The limits are 8,500 words, or about 16 printed pages, for reports originating in the secretariat, and 10,700 words, or about 20 printed pages, for reports not originating in the secretariat (see General Assembly resolutions 52/214 of 22 December 1997, 53/208 of 18 December 1998 and 59/265 of 23 December 2004).

32.   The piloting of paper-lean sessions could be extended/expanded to one or two committees subsidiary to the Commission, incorporating the experiences and lessons learned of the Advisory Committee.

33.   All documents will be delivered to member States through electronic means only.

34.   A study/evaluation of paper-lean meetings, including a plan to reduce the number of documents, can be presented to the Commission for its consideration.

Long term (five years and beyond)

35.   Paper-lean Commission sessions could commence at the latest with the seventy-fourth session (2018).

Appendix I

Paperless meetings at the United Nations Office at Nairobi

Background

1.   Electronic distribution of documents is not new at the United Nations. Most United Nations bodies post documents on their websites and documents are published electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations. In some cases, documents are distributed both electronically and in hard copy, particularly in the case of documents for meetings and conferences.

2.   Recently, the United Nations Environment Programme's Ozone Secretariat pioneered what has been called the "paperless" meeting, for which all documents are distributed in electronic format only, including pre-session, in-session and post-session documents. The Ozone Secretariat has now run five paperless meetings for the Meeting of the Parties and the Open-ended Working Group of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol. UNEP, as the secretariat of the intergovernmental negotiating committee for the preparation of a global legally binding instrument on mercury, recently ran that committee's first session as a paperless meeting. It is expected that the remaining meetings of the committee will also be paperless, along with all future meetings of the conferences of the parties and subsidiary bodies of the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. It is also expected that the twenty-sixth session of the UNEP Governing Council will be paperless.

Recommendations regarding the set-up of paperless meetings

3.   A number of recommendations for the conduct of successful paperless meetings follow. It is important to realize, however, that, as telecommunications technology evolves, these recommendations may become obsolete.

Technical requirements

4.   At each of the paperless meetings to date, electronic distribution of documents has been implemented via a dedicated, meeting-specific website, to which participants gain access via a dedicated intranet. The use of such a network has been successful and is therefore recommended. The network should preferably be a wireless one (Wi-Fi), and should allow for simultaneous access by as many meeting participants as possible.

5.   A meeting website could reside in any computer accessible via an Internet connection, but it has been considered safer to establish it on an onsite web server at the meeting venue. If the meeting venue normally has limited or erratic Internet connectivity, then an onsite server is the only realistic option.

6.   In the case of meetings involving a large number of participants in a small space, particular attention should be given to the management of the wireless network access points by the technicians involved.

7. One of the key challenges posed by a paperless meeting with numerous participants is the Wi-Fi infrastructure at the meeting venue. Many conference facilities have Wi-Fi infrastructure designed for casual Internet access by a relatively small number of users. The Wi-Fi infrastructure at such venues must therefore be upgraded to enable it to service the larger number of users that would be present at a paperless meeting.

8. In case of a network overload during a meeting, the server administrator might consider blocking participant access to any websites other than those needed for the conduct of the meeting. A less drastic measure would be to limit use of the available bandwidth for purposes such as video downloads and voice-over-Internet-Protocol telephony.

9. Another challenge is posed by the need for electricity for laptop computers. As their laptops are in nearly continuous use, meeting participants need access to electrical power outlets adjacent to their seats. The use of charging points situated away from participants' seats is not considered to be an adequate solution. Furthermore, a sufficient and constant supply of electricity is an important prerequisite. In venues where power supply is erratic or installed capacity insufficient to run the laptops, a generator is recommended.

10. Meeting organizers considering implementing a paperless meeting for the first time should consider providing for back-up photocopying in case of emergency.

Support for meeting participants

11. The invitation to a paperless meeting should advise meeting participants that the meeting will be wireless. It should also advise them to bring laptop computers (indicating minimum hardware and software specifications) with adapters for the type of electrical power outlet found at the meeting venue. The invitation should also note that a reasonable number of laptops will be available for loan to those meeting participants that do not have their own. Any additional communications to participants should include reminders regarding the above.

12. At the time of registration for the meeting, participants should be given the Internet address of the meeting website, essential instructions in a clear and simple format and, if applicable, the user name and password to allow them access. In addition, consideration should be given to conducting a brief demonstration of the paperless system in the main meeting room, preferably the day before the meeting begins. As many meeting participants may be unfamiliar with the hardware and software required for a paperless meeting, such a demonstration can help ensure that the meeting goes smoothly.

13. Although instruction should be provided as outlined above, connecting to the Wi-Fi network should be simple and automatic and should not require special knowledge of information technology. In addition, technicians (preferably bilingual) should be available inside and outside the meeting rooms throughout the meeting to assist participants with their technical needs. Meeting assistants and conference officers should be proficient in the use of the system and should also be ready to assist participants. Furthermore, to keep meeting websites simple and to facilitate

their use by meeting participants, only the information and documents pertaining to the meetings in question should be published on them.

Impact on conference services

14. From a conference-servicing perspective, the main benefit of paperless meetings is the elimination of the printing and distribution of paper documents. Publishing documents electronically saves time and allows meetings to proceed uninterrupted by the distribution of paper documents in the meeting room. Cost savings are achieved as paperless meetings do not require printing or distribution staff.

15. In terms of documentation processes and work flow, paper-based and paperless meetings are essentially the same from the point of view of the Division of Conference Services of the United Nations Office at Nairobi. The same submissions, approvals and document-processing activities take place. The main difference lies in the elimination of document production (printing) and the delivery of paper documents to the client, with the latter accomplished by publishing, or "uploading", the documents onto the meeting website or delivering them to the client by e-mail.

16 It is important to note that the use of paper has not yet been eliminated in the clearance of documents for translation and distribution, as it is considered that a paper record of manually signed approvals is still needed. Eventually, an electronic signature system may be implemented to eliminate the use of paper for this purpose.

17. Interpreters in most cases will require hard copies of documents. Minimal printing and photocopying equipment is therefore still needed for interpreters.

Appendix II

Excerpt from the report of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations on its 2003 regular session[*]

IV. Strengthening of the Non-Governmental Organizations Section of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs

34. At its 16th and 23rd meetings, on 16 and 21 May 2003, the Committee considered the following issue under item 5 of its agenda.

Paperless Committee

35. On 16 May 2003, the Chief of the Non-Governmental Organizations Section presented the pilot project for an electronic meeting system, or "Paperless Committee".

36. The Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations during its 2003 regular session was the first United Nations Committee to fully employ office automation and information technology in the conduct of its official work in an effort to eliminate the large volume of paper documentation that is normally required. This was achieved through a pilot project, the "Paperless Committee", an electronic meeting system. This undertaking represents a response to the proposals for rationalizing the management of conferences and meetings contained in recent reports on United Nations reform as they relate to electronic data processing and the flow of documentation as well as an attempt to facilitate the engagement of civil society and to support the global commitment to sustainability.

37. This initiative, spearheaded by the Non-Governmental Organizations Section of the Division for the Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, is part of an ongoing effort to improve the effectiveness of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations and the efficiency of its working methods. Prompted by the Organization-wide interest in exploring ways to exploit information and communications technology (ICT) and wireless fidelity applications, the realization of the "Paperless Committee" has been made possible by innovative partnerships with the business community and academia. The Hewlett Packard Corporation loaned the necessary hardware to the Committee, supplying 25 laptop computers and wireless connectivity for each member of the Committee and for meeting support staff. Staff to set up the programme and work with Committee members as "guides and trainers" were provided by the Mumbai Educational Trust of Mumbai, India, which provided a two-month sponsorship for nine of its top technical students to work with the Non-Governmental Organizations Section and the Committee.

38. When fully implemented, the "Paperless Committee" will provide users with: continuous document updates from the Chair and Secretariat; data transfers; easier archiving; electronic messages; simultaneous submission of questions electronically, note-taking and report writing and electronic vote counting. The development of a web site giving delegates access to documentation of all NGOs in consultative status with the

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[*] See E/2003/32 (Part II).

Economic and Social Council is envisaged. The use of laptops during the sessions of the Committee will, in the long run, offset the cost of approximately 40,000 pages of documentation usually handed out to members of the Committee at each session. Inputs will include all the documentation required for the Committee, including conference room papers. The output will include: the electronic circulation of responses from NGOs to questions asked by the Committee; electronic requests from delegates; electronic viewable attendance lists of NGO representatives present in the room; and information retrieval with all relevant data about applicant NGOs.

39. The Secretary-General has stressed that the conferences and meetings convened by the United Nations and the array of documentation they produce "reflect a central and fundamental aspect of how the world's most inclusive multilateral institution conducts its business". Leadership and support of this innovative way of conducting the business of the Committee will be crucial in making this initiative a success that can be emulated in other parts of the organization.

40. In that regard, the Committee was of the opinion that the "Paperless Committee" should be fully implemented and become a normal mode of operation for the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, facilitating its deliberations, and reducing and eliminating the volume of paper documentation the Committee has been required to handle. As a result, at its 27th meeting on 23 May 2003, the Committee recommended to the Economic and Social Council that it takes note of the Committee's resolution on the "Paperless Committee", approves its decision to implement the "Paperless Committee" at its future sessions and request the Secretary-General to ensure the provision of adequate staff and facilities in order to implement that decision (see part one, sect. I, draft decision I and resolution 2003/1). The Secretary of the Committee read out a statement regarding the draft resolution on the implementation of the electronic meeting system ("Paperless Committee").

Appendix III

Press release on the paperless committee pilot project of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations

16 May 2003

"Paperless Committee" pilot project praised in NGO committee— cited as first to fully employ information technology in official work

The Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations could take considerable pride in the fact that it was the first United Nations Committee to fully employ information technology in its official work, Hanifa Mezoui, Chief, Non-Governmental Organizations Section of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, told the Committee this morning.

As the Committee considered strengthening of the Non-Governmental Organizations Section of the Secretariat, Ms. Mezoui said that the "Paperless Committee" pilot project [see Press Release NGO/497 of 5 May] had been made possible by the Hewlett Packard Corporation, which provided hardware, and the Mumbai Educational Trust of Mumbai, India, which provided technical support.

The Committee's backlog in non-governmental organization (NGO) applications for status with the Economic and Social Council had increased 318 per cent over four years, and the number of applications had increased 40 per cent per annum, she said. The implementation of the "Paperless Committee — An Electronic Meeting System", would make it possible to process applications more efficiently and archive all documents related to the Committee's sessions. The electronic database took the place of some 650 documents, eliminating the need to photocopy up to 80,000 pages per year.

The benefits of a paperless committee included: increased speed and efficiency of the Committee's work; virtual elimination of paper and volume of photocopying; ease in searching documents; convenience for delegates; ease in generating reports; and the availability of the full history of an NGO's application in one place, she stated.

Continuation of the project would require an Information Technology Officer at the P-3 level and an Information Technology Assistant at the G-3 level at an approximate cost of $230,000 per annum, as well as an initial fixed cost of $122,770 for equipment, she added.

The implementation of an electronic meeting system using wireless technology would be a significant contribution towards the technological and process reform as proposed by the Secretary-General and would greatly facilitate the work of the Committee. "Your leadership and support for this potentially revolutionary way of conducting the business of the Committee will be crucial in making this initiative a success that could be emulated in other parts of the Organization", she concluded.

Speakers in the ensuing debate, including those from observer States Algeria, Lebanon and Ghana, applauded the increased efficiency of the Committee because of the pilot project, as well as the contributions made by Hewlett Packard and the Mumbai Educational Trust, which they

characterized as a good example of cooperation between the public, private and academic sector.

They stressed, however, that, as electronic information was only available during the session in the conference room, access to the information from their respective missions was of the utmost importance in order to study the material and save time during meetings. It was also noted that some countries had not acquired the necessary capacity to deal with matters electronically and that, therefore, some paper would remain necessary.

In order to sustain the project, they said, additional resources would be necessary, an issue that should be addressed by the Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary) and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ). Time and paper saved should, therefore, be quantified as far as possible. They also pointed out that the project went beyond the work of the Committee, as other Committees might follow suit. Pooling of Secretariat staff in that regard might be possible.

The 19-member Committee makes recommendations on an NGO's standing or reclassification with the Economic and Social Council using a variety of criteria, including applicant mandate, governance and financial regime. Currently, 2,234 NGOs have such status.

Current members of the NGO Committee are Cameroon, Senegal, Zimbabwe, Sudan, Côte d'Ivoire, China, Pakistan, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Chile, Colombia, Peru, Cuba, Russian Federation, Romania, Germany, France, United States and Turkey.

The Committee will meet again at 3 p.m. to consider review of the methods of work of the Committee.

Appendix IV

UN *Journal* sports a QR code

Posted on i-Seek: Thursday, 17 November 2011, New York | Author: Laila Shamji, DGACM

Have you ever wondered about those pixilated squares that you may have seen in magazines, in department stores, on business cards or on billboards lately? These are called QR codes, short for Quick Response codes.
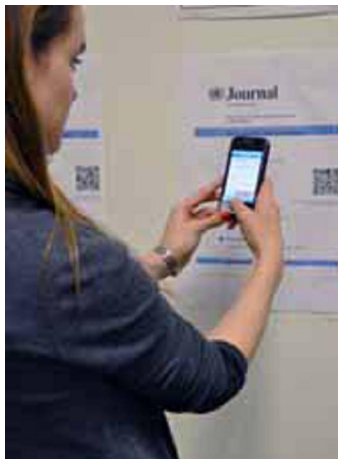
Developed in 1994, these 2D bar codes were originally used to track parts in auto plants. Unlike the traditional bar codes, QR codes have high capacity to encode data (up to 7,089 characters) and because of this capacity, the use of QR codes has expanded into other areas. Using QR codes scanner on a smart phone or a tablet, users can scan QR codes and retrieve electronic information pertaining to a particular product instantly on their mobile devices.

For the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, the concept of object hyperlinking, which connects offline objects (hardcopy documents) with online objects (UN documents in ODS), is crucial in its strategy to reduce the amount of paper used in printing official parliamentary documents and reports, preferring instead to make publications easily accessible and available electronically.

As a start, QR codes are now printed on the Journal in all official languages of the United Nations. By scanning the Journal on their way to meetings, readers can download information on the daily schedule of United Nations meetings to their smart phones or tablets in a matter of seconds. QR codes give the United Nations an immense potential to disseminate parliamentary documents, publications, contact information on business cards, links to UN websites or online reports, and links to social media tools. The next initiative will be to roll out business cards with QR codes to the Secretariat staff in New York.

Mr. Franz Baumann, Assistant Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management, notes "that the QR codes support DGACM's drive from paper to the web, which will not only enhance our products and services, but do so without raising costs. Bringing online content to a mobile audience in real time is a win-win proposition."

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