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Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

Legal Subcommittee

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Item 12 of the provisional agenda**

**Proposals to the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer
Space for new items to be considered by the Legal
Subcommittee at its fifty-first session**

Review of the use of transcripts of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its Legal Subcommittee

Working paper submitted by the Secretariat

1. The use of unedited transcripts in lieu of verbatim records was introduced by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space at its thirty-ninth session, in 1996, and by the Legal Subcommittee at its thirty-sixth session, in 1997.¹
2. At its fortieth session, in 1997, the Committee agreed, on the basis of a conference room paper prepared by the Secretariat entitled “Utilization of unedited verbatim transcripts”, to continue the use of those transcripts in lieu of verbatim records and to further review its requirements for those transcripts at its forty-first session, in 1998 (A/52/20, paras. 167-170). Since then, no change in practice has been made by the Committee or the Legal Subcommittee.
3. At its fifty-third session, in 2010, the Committee requested the Secretariat to present to the Legal Subcommittee at its fiftieth session and the Committee at its

* Reissued for technical reasons on 20 April 2011.

** A/AC.105/C.2/L.280.

¹ See the report of the Secretariat on records of the Committee (A/AC.105/L.207) and General Assembly resolutions 48/222 B, 49/221 B, 50/27, 50/206 B and 51/123. In accordance with Assembly resolution 51/211 B, the Chair of the Committee on Conferences, in his letter of 1 April 1997, invited all intergovernmental bodies entitled to written meeting records to consider the possibility of requesting the Secretariat to issue unedited transcripts of one meeting for comparison purposes, with a view to the possible substitution of such transcripts for their usual records in the future.



fifty-fourth session, for their consideration, a detailed proposal to discontinue the use of unedited transcripts; the Committee noted that the use of digital recordings should be assessed (A/65/20, para. 320). This request should be seen in the context of the ongoing considerations by the Committee and its subsidiary bodies of organizational matters and methods of work, including ways and means to rationalize and optimize documentation.

4. At present the Secretariat is providing unedited transcripts in the six official languages of the United Nations for the Committee and its Legal Subcommittee. Those transcripts are produced on a contractual basis. The total amount paid to contractors for text processing is in the range of \$80,000 per year for the sessions of both bodies. In 2010, the Conference Management Service, which is responsible for the processing of the transcripts, handled more than 190 invoices and contracts related to the transcripts. In addition, the invoices and contracts were processed by the Financial Resources Management Service. In other words, the amount that goes directly to the contractors for the production of the transcripts is in addition to associated staff costs related to the necessary administrative procedures undertaken by the Conference Management Service, the Financial Resources Management Service and the Office for Outer Space Affairs of the Secretariat.

5. An alternative to the use of transcripts is to provide digital recordings in all six official languages of the United Nations. The Information Technology Service estimates that the best solution would be to create a unique website for these recordings by applying a system for automatically uploading them. This application would have to interact with the digital recording system already in place and the e-Meets application, the meetings management tool of the Secretariat. The setting up of such an advanced application would require the contractual services of a developer for an estimated period of five months.

6. After having held consultations with the Conference Management Service, the Secretariat has prepared the following proposal for consideration by the Committee and its Legal Subcommittee:

(a) The current practice of unedited transcripts will be discontinued temporarily for the period 2012-2015, for review by the Legal Subcommittee at its fifty-fourth session and by the Committee at its fifty-eighth session, both in 2015;

(b) During this trial period, and starting with the sessions in 2012, the recordings in the six official languages of the United Nations will be placed on the website of the Office for Outer Space Affairs in the form of the dedicated MP3 files already in use. During this period, the Secretariat will study the options for developing a dedicated advanced digital application as may be required;

(c) In addition to the digital recordings, a written script in English will be provided, to be used to assist in servicing the sessions and for research purposes. The script could also be used as a search tool for the digital recordings;

(d) In 2015, the Legal Subcommittee at its fifty-fourth session and the Committee at its fifty-eighth session will evaluate the use of digital recordings and decide whether to develop this application further or to return to using unedited transcripts.