



UNITED NATIONS  
GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY



Distr.  
GENERAL

A/7850  
10 December 1969

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Twenty-fourth session  
Agenda item 82

PUBLICATIONS AND DOCUMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Report of the Fifth Committee

Rapporteur: Mr. Gregor WOSCHNAGG (Austria)

1. The Fifth Committee considered agenda item 82 (Publications and documentation of the United Nations) at its 1338th to 1341st meetings, held from 1 to 4 December 1969. For this purpose, it had before it:

- (a) A report by the Secretary-General on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 2292 (XXII) of 8 December 1967 (A/7579);
- (b) A report on documentation of the United Nations by three members of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/7576 and Corr.1) and the observations of the Secretary-General thereon (A/C.5/1247);
- (c) Chapter VII B of the report of the Committee on the Reorganization of the Secretariat 1/ and the observations of the Secretary-General thereon (A/C.5/1257 and Corr.1);
- (d) A report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/7789) containing that Committee's observations and recommendations on the several reports enumerated above.

2. At the 1339th meeting of the Committee, the representative of Canada introduced, on behalf of Canada, Czechoslovakia, New Zealand and Poland, a draft resolution (A/C.5/L.1010). The purpose of the draft resolution was to endorse,

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-third Session, Annexes, addendum to agenda item 74, document A/7359, annex.

or otherwise bring to the attention of other bodies, those recommendations contained in the various reports which for their implementation required action by the General Assembly or other organs, and to invite the Secretary-General to continue his implementation of those which were within his competence as well as to take any other steps which might reduce documentation. The sponsors believed that a reduction of documentation would free resources which would enable the United Nations better to implement programmes of real value to the Governments of Member States and would enable the Secretary-General better to comply with resolutions which had been adopted calling for simultaneous distribution of documentation in the working languages in good time before it was to be discussed.

3. Delegations which participated in the debate, while recognizing that some progress had been made in reducing documentation in some areas, expressed their continuing and increasing concern at the growing total volume of publications and documentation of the United Nations. Not only was that volume so great that it outpaced the capacity of the Secretariat to produce the documents in the requisite languages in good time, but it also exceeded the ability of the delegations to give sufficiently serious consideration to them. The implementation of many of the recommendations of the Committee on the Reorganization of the Secretariat, the Joint Inspection Unit and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions could make a valuable contribution to a reduction of documentation and an improvement of the working methods of the Organization. On the other hand, caution was called for in respect of some of the recommendations, and even more generally when attempting to reduce documentation, lest steps be taken that would handicap the work of the various organs and the delegations, particularly the smaller ones. To the latter end certain oral suggestions were made for amendments to the draft resolution.

4. At the 1341st meeting of the Committee, the representative of Canada, on behalf of the co-sponsors, which the delegations of Lesotho and Mali had joined, introduced a revised draft resolution (A/C.5/L.1010/Rev.1) that took into account the suggested amendments and had been revised in consultation with a number of interested delegations. He also presented the text of a new paragraph dealing with the placing of printing contracts which had been suggested at a previous meeting.

/...

5. The Fifth Committee, at its 1341st meeting held on 4 December 1969, adopted the draft resolution and the additional paragraph without objection (see paragraph 6 below).

RECOMMENDATION OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE

6. The Fifth Committee therefore recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

Publications and documentation of the United Nations

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 593 (VI) of 4 February 1952, 789 (VIII) of 9 December 1953, 1202 (XII) of 13 December 1957, 1203 (XII) of 13 December 1957, 1272 (XIII) of 14 November 1958, 1851 (XVII) of 19 December 1962, 1987 (XVIII) of 17 December 1963, 2116 (XX) of 21 December 1965, 2150 (XXI) of 4 November 1966, 2239 (XXI) of 20 December 1966, 2247 (XXI) of 20 December 1966, 2292 (XXII) of 8 December 1967, 2361 (XXII) of 19 December 1967 and 2478 (XXIII) of 21 December 1968,

Reiterating its concern at the growing volume of the publications and documentation of the United Nations, which Governments are finding increasingly difficult to use effectively,

Convinced that, by freeing resources currently being utilized in excessive documentation, and in activities that may have wholly or largely outlived their usefulness, the United Nations would be better able to implement programmes of real value to the Governments of Member States,

Convinced that a substantial reduction in the volume of documentation would enable the Secretary-General better to comply with statutory requirements for the preparation and simultaneous distribution within the required time-limits of documents in the working languages of the various United Nations organs,

1. Appeals to all United Nations organs, bodies and committees to consider ways of reducing documentation, and in particular the possibility of adopting a form of records less voluminous and less costly than that currently being used;

2. Takes note of the recommendations and suggestions for reductions in the volume of documentation contained in the reports of the Secretary-General,<sup>2/</sup>

---

<sup>2/</sup> Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-second Session, Annexes, agenda item 81, document A/6675; A/7579; A/C.5/1247 and A/C.5/1257.

in reports of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions,<sup>3/</sup> in chapter VII (B) of the report of the Committee on the Reorganization of the Secretariat,<sup>4/</sup> in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit<sup>5/</sup> and in a working paper prepared by the Secretariat for the Economic and Social Council,<sup>6/</sup> notes that many of them have been or are being implemented already, and requests the Secretary-General, in the light of his own comments and those of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on them, to implement as quickly as possible those recommendations and suggestions that fall within his competence and authority and to continue his efforts to reduce documentation;

3. Notes that the Economic and Social Council has already achieved a certain measure of success in reducing documentation, as described in paragraphs 615 to 631 of its report for the period 3 August 1968 to 8 August 1969,<sup>7/</sup> and that the United Nations Trade and Development Board has examined proposals for improving the machinery of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, and urges both bodies to continue their efforts to reduce the volume of documentation, without at the same time impairing effective positive action on worth while programmes;

4. Requests the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, the Trade and Development Board and the Industrial Development Board to consider, when establishing a new subsidiary body, conference or committee, whether or not it should have summary records of its proceedings;

5. Requests the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its twenty-fifth session a list of the resolutions of the General Assembly and its subsidiary organs that call for periodic reports, with an indication of the number of pages of each of these documents, and invites the Advisory Committee on

---

<sup>3/</sup> A/7400 and A/7789.

<sup>4/</sup> Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-third Session, Annexes, addendum to agenda item 74, document A/7359, annex.

<sup>5/</sup> A/7576 and Corr.1, annex.

<sup>6/</sup> E/L.1249.

<sup>7/</sup> Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 3 (A/7603).

Administrative and Budgetary Questions to submit any recommendations it might wish to offer for shortening, discontinuing or issuing less frequently such reports;

6. Requests the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and the Joint Inspection Unit to watch out for activities that give rise to documentation which in their opinion is excessive or of doubtful value, and to include in their reports recommendations for shortening, discontinuing or issuing less frequently such documentation;

7. Approves the decision of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples that the proceedings of its meetings should be verbatim records in provisional form only, to which addenda and/or corrigenda might be issued, and to dispense with summary records;

8. Reaffirms paragraph 1 (a) (ii) of its resolution 593 (VI) by which it invited the Governments of Member States to restrict both the number and the volume of the documents submitted for processing to what is strictly required by resolutions and other statutory decisions of a United Nations organ, or is clearly relevant to agenda items under discussion, and appeals to the Governments of Member States to exercise restraint in submitting lengthy documents to be distributed as documents of the United Nations;

9. Notes that the traditional system of commissioning background papers for international conferences sometimes gives rise to a great deal of documentation, and requests the Secretary-General to draw to the attention of bodies concerned with organizing such conferences the desirability of giving careful consideration to employing whenever possible annotated agenda, lists of headings for discussion, and the like, instead of, or in conjunction with a reduced number of, background papers;

10. Decides that:

(a) No United Nations body or organ shall have both verbatim and summary records;

(b) Verbatim or summary records shall not be provided for a newly established subsidiary body of the General Assembly (rule 60 of the rules of procedure of the

/...

Assembly notwithstanding), or for a special meeting or conference, unless they are specifically authorized in the enabling resolution;

(c) Verbatim records shall not include the texts of routine exchanges of views about the date and place of the next meeting, congratulations, expressions of condolences and the like, but shall merely report them briefly, except that in special circumstances the organ or body concerned may decide otherwise;

(d) In the case of verbatim records, the language versions other than the original shall be prepared in accordance with the following principles:

- (i) Translations into and from Russian shall be used;
- (ii) Translations into and from Chinese shall be used;
- (iii) Otherwise (that is, as between English and French, English and Spanish, and French and Spanish), transcriptions of the simultaneous interpretations, which shall be checked editorially and revised if necessary to guard against serious errors, shall be used;

(e) Speeches or statements by representatives, by the Secretary General or his representative, or by persons presenting reports on behalf of committees or other bodies, may be reproduced in extenso in summary records or as official documents only if they serve as bases for discussion, provided that the relevant decision is taken by the body concerned after a statement of the financial implications has been submitted in accordance with regulation 13.1 of the Financial Regulations of the United Nations;

(f) Each report on the administrative and financial implications of a proposal for a non-recurrent report to be submitted in accordance with financial regulation 13.1 shall be prepared in accordance with the following rules:

- (i) It shall set forth the nature of the document, the possible number of pages, and the type and number of copies to be printed;
- (ii) It shall state how much time will be required to reproduce the requested document in all the working languages;
- (iii) It shall indicate whether there is any previous publication on the same subject within the family of the United Nations which would duplicate or substantially overlap the proposed publication; and
- (iv) Where, in the light of discussion, delegations consider a particular report so useful that it should be printed and bound, it shall state

the cost incurred in preparing the mimeographed version, including drafting costs, and the estimated cost of the proposed new edition;

11. Requests the Secretary-General to continue his efforts in order to widen the existing practice of soliciting bids for external printing of publications of the United Nations from all Member States;

12. Requests the Secretary-General to prepare a short document setting forth in clear terms the policies laid down by the General Assembly regarding the control and limitation of documentation and to make this document available to members prior to each session of a council, board, commission, committee or other body;

13. Requests the Secretary General to report to the General Assembly at its twenty-fifth session on the implementation of the present resolution and to include in his report:

- (a) Any reasons he might have for not implementing the recommendations and suggestions referred to in paragraph 2 above;
- (b) The information requested in paragraph 5 above;
- (c) Any complementary recommendations that he might deem appropriate.

-----