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PROPOSED MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 1992-1997\*

MAJOR PROGRAMME VIII. PUBLIC INFORMATION

Programme 38. Public information

CONTENTS

	<u>Paragraphs</u>	<u>Page</u>
A. Programme .....	38.1 - 38.8	2
1. General orientation .....	38.1 - 38.3	2
2. Overall strategy .....	38.4 - 38.6	2
3. Subprogramme structure and priorities .....	38.7 - 38.8	3
B. Subprogrammes .....	38.9 - 38.16	4
1. Promotional services .....	38.9 - 38.12	4
2. Information services .....	38.13 - 38.16	6

\* The present document contains programme 38 of the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997. The complete medium-term plan will subsequently be issued in final printed form as Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 6 (A/45/6/Rev.1).

## PROGRAMME 38. PUBLIC INFORMATION

### A. Programme

#### 1. General orientation

38.1 The basic legislative authority for programme 38 (Public information) is General Assembly resolution 13 (I), which has been further elaborated in subsequent annual resolutions on questions relating to information, the most recent of which is General Assembly resolution 44/50 of 8 December 1989.

38.2 The primary objective of the programme is to promote an informed understanding of the work and purposes of the Organization. The approach to information activities will continue to be based on two complementary concepts - promotion and coverage. One will ensure that the planning and development of strategies, as well as the production of public information materials, will be oriented by and highlight the major themes and priority areas mandated by the General Assembly, through multi-media promotional campaigns; while the other will ensure adequate media coverage and public interest in the ongoing activities of the Organization. Where appropriate, information activities will be developed in the context of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations.

38.3 The achievement of the objectives of this programme is, however, faced with a number of challenges, including:

(a) The diversity in cultural, linguistic, political and regional interests within the United Nations membership, which calls for a dynamic information approach that is sufficiently flexible but consistent in meeting the varying information needs of the peoples around the world about the United Nations;

(b) The complementarity of activities within the United Nations system, including the area of information and communication, which creates the risk of a duplication of work;

(c) The rapidly evolving technologies in the field of communications and the need for rapid dissemination of information;

(d) Reconciling growing information needs with finite resources available for public information activities in the context of the budget of the Organization.

#### 2. Overall strategy

38.4 The programme will be implemented by the Department of Public Information. Other organizational units of the Secretariat are involved in public information activities to the extent that the latter require technical and substantive expertise that is not available in the Department of Public Information or when its resources are insufficient. In those cases, the Department of Public Information provides advice to the substantive units concerned, as appropriate, and further efforts will be made to consolidate and co-ordinate public information activities in accordance with paragraph 17 of General Assembly resolution 43/213 of 21 December 1988. Co-ordination will be enhanced with all departments of the

Secretariat, and in particular with those responsible for the priority themes of the Organization.

35.5 The programme will continue to be reviewed annually by the Committee on Information and by the Special Political Committee of the General Assembly.

38.6 The overall strategy of the Department will include:

(a) Reviewing trends of opinion throughout the world about the activities of the United Nations and the extent to which an informed understanding of the work of the United Nations is being secured;

(b) Producing public information materials directed at clearly defined audiences. Efforts will be made to sustain and enlarge these audiences, particularly those that have a multiplier effect, such as the media, non-governmental organizations and educational institutions;

(c) Maintaining a global network of United Nations information centres and services, with an adequate regional and linguistic balance, in order to ensure the highest possible local presence for United Nations activities, purposes and programmes in political, economic, social and humanitarian fields, particularly in those regions where mass information media are less developed;

(d) Strengthening co-operation and co-ordination within the United Nations system through the mechanism of the Joint United Nations Information Committee, in view of the complementarity of the activities in the field of information and communication and in order to avoid duplication of activities. Whenever possible, joint projects and programmes will be encouraged to the greatest extent possible;

(e) Increasing gradually the computerization of operations and access to new technologies for the production and distribution of public information material;

(f) Setting up and refining the parameters used in evaluating production and distribution activities so as to improve their overall impact. The Department will continue to determine the extent of its access to audiences, media outlets, as well as public opinion trends about the United Nations.

### 3. Subprogramme structure and priorities

38.7 On the basis of the general orientation of this programme, two subprogrammes are proposed under this programme:

Subprogramme 1: Promotional services

Subprogramme 2: Information services

38.8 Priority will be given to subprogramme 1, Promotional services.

## B. Subprogrammes

### SUBPROGRAMME 1. PROMOTIONAL SERVICES

#### (a) Objectives

38.9 The legislative authority for this subprogramme is derived from General Assembly resolution 13 (I) and Economic and Social Council resolutions 1012 (XXXVII) and 1806 (LV). The mandate is further elaborated in General Assembly resolution 44/50, in particular paragraph 1, section II.

38.10 Public awareness and media coverage in relation to United Nations activities are still inadequate and the profile and visibility of the United Nations around the world need to be increased. Recent positive developments affecting long-standing world problems are in part attributable to the wide-ranging activities undertaken in the context of General Assembly mandates on which an informed understanding among the peoples of the world is still wanting. This is especially true in the areas of:

(a) Peace, security and disarmament (including peace-keeping and peace-making operations);

(b) The struggle against apartheid, and the question of Palestine;

(c) Self-determination and decolonization;

(d) Human rights (including issues of racial discrimination);

(e) Development (including economic and social issues, the establishment of the new international economic order, external debt, African recovery, the environment, drugs, the fourth United Nations development decade, media development and the establishment of a new world information and communications order, women and youth).

38.11 The objectives of this subprogramme are to promote to the greatest possible extent an informed understanding of the work and purposes of the United Nations among the peoples of the world; more specifically, the objectives of this subprogramme are to develop well-planned activities aimed at achieving clear and limited goals; to develop more effective implementation strategies, involving the clarification of concepts, the selection of media and other vehicles for the implementation of planned activities; to maintain closer co-ordination within the Secretariat and the whole system, not only in the planning of public information activities, but also in the implementation of approved activities through a common strategy; and to provide counsel, support and strategic planning in relation to public information needs to other areas of the Secretariat, in order to maximize media and public awareness and utilization of United Nations materials. Information activities will be adjusted constantly to changing needs and circumstances.

#### (b) Course of action of the Secretariat

38.12 During the plan period, promotional activities will be implemented on priority issues, special events and observances for each of the priority themes of the United Nations. Where appropriate, they will be developed in the context of

the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, which will provide a valuable framework for concomitant efforts to promote awareness of the programmes of activity carried out by the Organization and to enhance the Organization's profile and visibility on the world stage. This will entail:

- (a) Providing communications support to the activities of the Secretary-General and other senior staff and increasing public awareness of the role of the United Nations in multilateral diplomacy;
- (b) Ensuring regular contacts with other Secretariat departments and with other organizations of the United Nations system in the planning and implementation of public information activities; and consolidating and co-ordinating information activities in the field with other members of the United Nations system, in order to improve efficiency in the delivery of public information;
- (c) Planning public information activities and strategies by which they are to be implemented, utilizing all media; developing and implementing promotional campaigns for international conferences and observances proclaimed by the General Assembly;
- (d) Preparing pamphlets, booklets, information kits, video cassettes, photographic and other materials as needed, and in as many local languages as possible, to promote a priority issue, a specific event or the United Nations in general;
- (e) Maintaining an efficient and effective distribution system for all the Department's information material, using up-to-date methods of transmission, including satellite and electronic transmission of information; co-ordinating physical and electronic distribution of departmental information products to information centres and services, the media and non-governmental organizations;
- (f) Continuing the development of a system that ensures consistency of style and signatures on United Nations products;
- (g) Increasing co-production arrangements in order to enhance the promotion of United Nations mandates and foster the utilization of materials produced;
- (h) Gathering and analysing results of existing public opinion surveys that have a bearing on the United Nations and its activities; monitoring the media, assessing public opinion based on publicly available material and providing feedback thereon; and collaborating with existing organizations around the world that engage in public opinion surveys for purposes of including in their surveys questions of interest to the United Nations;
- (i) Reviewing the impact of the information programmes of the Department in order to improve programme effectiveness; and conducting appropriate research to assess public attitudes concerning the United Nations and its activities;
- (j) Expanding an out-reach programme for editors and other senior media representatives, particularly those whose organizations have no accredited correspondents at the United Nations; and organizing editors round tables to familiarize media leaders with United Nations issues and procedures;

(k) Maintaining a speaker's bureau to provide qualified speakers on the United Nations for schools and universities, professional and business associations, radio and television organizations and other interested groups; and responding to public inquiries of a general nature.

## SUBPROGRAMME 2. INFORMATION SERVICES

### (a) Objectives

38.13 The most recent legislative mandate for this subprogramme derives from General Assembly resolution 44/50, in particular subparagraph 3 of paragraph 1, section II.

38.14 While major developments and announcements are covered regularly by the media, it is a fact that regular coverage of United Nations meetings and debates does not always meet the expectation of Member States. The format of some electronic programmes has excluded the United Nations from many markets, while diversified formats would allow flexible utilization of United Nations materials. Planning of programmes has not ensured sufficient complementarity in the focus of productions in radio, television and publications. United Nations information materials have not been consistently available in appropriate languages.

38.15 The objectives of this subprogramme are to provide all services needed for the daily, weekly and periodical press, both at Headquarters and other United Nations offices, that may be required to ensure that the press is supplied with full information about the activities of the United Nations; and to produce and ensure timely coverage of United Nations activities, and distribution of information materials in formats and languages that maximize utilization by media and other re-disseminators to as broad an audience as possible.

### (b) Course of action for the Secretariat

38.16 During the medium-term plan period, the Department of Public Information will:

(a) Prepare summaries of all major meetings and events in English and French for use by press correspondents, delegations and the United Nations Secretariat;

(b) Prepare press releases that provide wide coverage of events in accordance with priorities set by the General Assembly in English and French in a form appropriate for immediate distribution by media agencies;

(c) Introduce new formats of weekly news summaries;

(d) Seek new international broadcasters for wider dissemination of radio and television news and feature programmes;

(e) Provide action-oriented photographs of major meetings and events on a timely basis for use by media, publications and delegations;

(f) Produce daily and weekly radio news spots and news magazines for distribution by telephone feed and satellite to national and international broadcasters;

(g) Provide television coverage of major United Nations events for use by outside broadcasters and for archival purposes;

(h) Produce a selection of electronic magazines (radio and television) on United Nations activities and priority issues for wide distribution;

(i) Produce a high quality portfolio of monthly, quarterly and annual publications aimed at specific audiences. The publications portfolio will include: basic documentation, institutional references and periodicals;

(j) Improve the availability, scope and timeliness of documentation on the United Nations at the global network of United Nations information centres and their locally affiliated depositories in order to increase access and impact;

(k) Provide liaison services to visiting representatives of the media;

(l) Provide accreditation, liaison and information services to press correspondents at the United Nations and to non-governmental organizations.

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