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

MAJOR PROGRAMME IX. CONFERENCE SERVICES

Programme 39. Conference and library services

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* The present document contains programme 39 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 39. CONFERENCE AND LIBRARY SERVICES

A. Programme

1. General orientation

39.1 The basic mandate for programme 39 is derived from Articles 97 and 98 of the Charter of the United Nations, in which the Secretary-General is designated as the chief administrative officer of the Organization with responsibility for performing such functions as are entrusted to him by the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Trusteeship Council and the Economic and Social Council; and from the rules of procedure of those organs, which provide that the Secretariat shall receive, translate into the appropriate official languages, print and distribute documents, reports and resolutions of the organs and their subsidiary bodies, shall interpret speeches made at meetings, shall prepare, print and circulate the records of the sessions, shall have custody and ensure proper preservation of the documents in the archives of the organs, shall distribute documents to the Members of the United Nations and, generally, shall perform all other work that the organs may require. In its resolution XIV (I) of 12 February 1946, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to take over and maintain the Library and Archives of the League of Nations. Since then the Organization has established libraries at major centres to enable the delegations, Secretariat and other official groups of the Organization to obtain, with the greatest possible speed, convenience and economy, the library materials needed in the execution of their duties.

39.2 The basic mandates are supplemented by General Assembly resolutions concerning the pattern of conferences and, in particular, the need to ensure the most rational and effective use of all United Nations conference centres and facilities, the terms of reference of the Committee on Conferences, the control and limitation of documents and meeting records, and the equal treatment of languages at the United Nations. The most recent and comprehensive of those resolutions are 37/14 of 16 November 1982, 40/243 of 18 December 1985, 42/207 of 11 December 1987, and 43/222 of 21 December 1988. Functions and organizational arrangements for conference library services are set out in several sections of the organizational manual of the Secretariat and include: the sections relating to the Department of Conference Services (ST/SGB/Organization, section Q/Rev.2, and ST/SGB/Organization, section Q/Rev.2 (Part II)) at Headquarters; the Conference Services Division at Geneva (ST/SGB/Organization, section S, as modified by ST/SGB/186 and ST/SGB/189); the United Nations Office at Vienna (ST/SGB/Organization, section Z, as modified by ST/SGB/218); the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ST/SGB/Organization, section K (II)); the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ST/SGB/Organization, section K (III)); the Economic Commission for Africa (ST/SGB/Organization, section K (IV)/Rev.1); the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ST/SGB/Organization, section K (V)); and the United Nations Environment Programme (ST/SGB/Organization, section O).

39.3 Policies governing the preparation, production, distribution and sale of United Nations documents are determined, and their implementation monitored, by an interdepartmental Publications Board, comprising representatives of author departments and processing services and chaired by the Under-Secretary-General for Conference Services and Special Assignments, whose Department provides the Board's secretariat. The Board is assisted by a Working Committee at Headquarters and by subsidiary bodies at other duty stations. Under its terms of reference, set out in

ST/SGB/Organization, annex I, the Board, inter alia, co-ordinates planning and supervises execution of the publications programme and issues directives and regulations on behalf of the Secretary-General on publications policies and practices. The responsibility for the quality and timely submission of materials for processing remains with author departments and offices and the Board has not concerned itself with public information materials except those specifically included in the publications programme.

39.4 Within the framework of these mandates, the general aims of this programme will be as follows:

(a) To provide to the organs of the United Nations, other intergovernmental bodies and their respective subsidiary bodies the services required for the efficient and effective conduct of their meetings and conferences in a manner that makes optimum and most cost-effective use of the conference services, resources and facilities resources available world wide;

(b) To develop and plan, for submission to the Committee on Conferences, a proposed calendar of meetings for the Organization that adheres to the resolutions and rules and principles of conference planning and that is designed in such a way as to allow for the most cost-effective use, world wide, of conference-servicing resources, centres and facilities;

(c) To implement the publications programme of the Organization, as approved by intergovernmental bodies, in an efficient and economical manner;

(d) To ensure the quality, timely issuance, availability and wide dissemination of documents and publications produced by the Organization to Member States and other users in a broad variety of readily accessible forms;

(e) To ensure adherence to the procedures established for the control and limitation of documentation in material submitted for processing;

(f) To undertake advance planning in connection with the publications programme so as to establish realistic budget estimates, to foresee translation requirements, to optimize the allocation of resources among publications, to ensure publication at the proper time and in proper quantities, to optimize the use of internal reproduction capacity, to minimize the costs of external contractual printing, to increase the general awareness of United Nations publications and to control the execution of the programme.

39.5 While the actual requirements for conference services depend upon the calendar of conferences approved by the General Assembly for each biennium and are difficult to estimate for the entire medium-term plan period, several factors that are likely to affect the level of services can be identified. On the one hand, the enhanced role of the Organization in the preservation of international peace and security, and the trend towards greater multilateral co-operation in a wide range of economic, social, environmental and legal fields, are two factors that may tend to increase the number of meetings and conferences held under the auspices of the United Nations, as well as the consequent demand for conference services during the medium-term plan period. On the other hand, several intergovernmental bodies are nearing completion of their work and would no longer require servicing. In addition, studies under way of United Nations intergovernmental structures and

functions in certain areas, notably in the economic and social fields, as called for under recommendation 8 of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations, 1/ may result in modifications of intergovernmental machinery that could decrease conference-servicing requirements. With regard to library and information services, there will clearly be a growing demand for a variety of information and reference services that go considerably beyond those traditionally provided by libraries. For the programme as a whole, it will continue to be important to make every effort to use the resources available in the most efficient and effective manner possible, so as to respond to new and changing requirements of Member States in a timely and economic manner, while maintaining high standards of quality.

39.6 A major concern during the medium-term plan period will be how to harness advances in technology and communications effectively so as to establish a truly global network of conference and library services that can be used for the electronic storage, remote retrieval and transmission of texts and images world wide. Such a network should bring significant gains in the timeliness and efficiency with which services are provided to conferences and meetings, with parity of treatment for all official languages and improvements in the access of Member States and other users to the documents and publications of the Organization.

39.7 An important issue of continuing concern is that of making the most efficient use of scarce resources. Under the guidance of the Committee on Conferences, every effort will be made to plan an efficient programme of meetings and conferences that makes the most rational and effective use of all United Nations conference centres, resources and facilities. Attention will be given to measures for controlling and limiting the volume, as well as improving the quality and timely issuance, of documents and publications produced by the Organization. In the search for greater efficiency, the work of the programme will be organized to derive maximum benefit from the growing range of technological innovations available for conference and library services.

2. Overall strategy

39.8 By its resolution 43/222 B, the General Assembly decided to retain the Committee on Conferences as a permanent subsidiary organ to advise it on all matters pertaining to the organization of conferences in the United Nations. In this context, the Committee is responsible for planning and co-ordinating conferences and meetings, in close consultation with the Secretariat and all relevant bodies in the preparation of the draft calendar of conferences, with the aim of staggering meetings throughout the year and avoiding overlapping; examining the proposals of the Secretary-General on the draft calendar of conferences and meetings and recommending to the General Assembly a draft calendar to meet the needs of the United Nations and to assure optimum use of conference-servicing resources; acting on behalf of the Assembly with respect to departures from the approved calendar; presenting recommendations to the Assembly on ways and means to ensure optimum use of conference facilities and services, including documentation; advising the Assembly on the current and future requirements of the Organization for conference services, facilities and documentation; making recommendations to the Assembly on means of ensuring improved co-ordination of conferences within the United Nations system, including conference services and facilities, and to conduct appropriate related consultations; monitoring implementation on General Assembly resolutions on organization and servicing of, and documentation for, conferences

and meetings; monitoring publications policy with the assistance of the Publications Board of the Secretariat and taking into account the positions adopted by the Committee on Information and other relevant bodies; and reporting annually thereon to the General Assembly.

39.9 The overall responsibility for the direction and development of conference-servicing policy in the United Nations rests with the Under-Secretary-General for Conference Services and Special Assignments. Within the Secretariat, responsibility for the provision of the full range of conference and library services at Headquarters rests with the Department of Conference Services and at Geneva with the Conference Services Division. At Vienna, current arrangements involve shared responsibility for provision of conference and library services to the organizations at the Vienna International Centre. Under those arrangements, a joint meetings and interpretation service is provided by the United Nations, a joint language and documents service by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and joint library and printing services by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In its resolution 44/201 A of 21 December 1989, the General Assembly endorsed the view of the Secretary-General that a single conference-servicing facility at the Vienna International Centre would represent the ideal solution from the standpoint of cost efficiency and that a unified service operated by the United Nations would be best equipped to promote the most efficient and effective use of scarce resources. A review of common and joint services at Vienna is under way and the results of the review and related consultations with other organizations concerned will be reported to the General Assembly in due course for appropriate action. Consequently, it is not possible at this point to say with certainty what secretariat arrangements will apply for conference and library services at Vienna during the medium-term plan period. More limited conference services are also available at other duty stations, most notably at Bangkok, Santiago, Addis Ababa, Baghdad and Nairobi, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Economic Commission for Africa, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat). Additional conference services for conferences and meetings at these locations and elsewhere are organized by the Department of Conference Services at Headquarters or the Conference Services Division at Geneva, depending on their location. In addition, the Department of Conference Services is responsible for establishing policies, procedures and practices for, and co-ordinating the provision of, conference services in the Secretariat.

39.10 The activities to be carried out within the programme of conference and library services during the period of the medium-term plan will obviously depend upon the number, location, nature and timing of meetings and conferences to be held, as well as the number and characteristics of documents and publications required by Member States and their needs for access to electronic information stored in data bases of the Secretariat.

39.11 In order to address those issues, the programme will continue to place considerable emphasis upon the application of technological innovations in every aspect of its activities. In the previous medium-term plan period, attention concentrated upon the introduction of word-processing capacities in all official languages and the establishment of a computer-based documents recording, information and tracking system. During the 1992-1997 period, the focus will be on the utilization of the United Nations telecommunications network linking conference

and library services in New York, at Geneva and at Vienna, as well as the regional commissions and other duty stations, so that not only information but also the full text of documents in all official languages can be stored, retrieved and transmitted electronically world-wide, using optical disc technology. Developments in the field of machine-assisted translation will also be further examined. The first steps will be the in-house implementation of computerized reference and terminology data bases in all official languages, the expansion of access to external terminology data bases and the linkage of data bases to translators' work-stations. Greater use will also be made of electronic publishing techniques to improve the quality of United Nations documents and publications and to reduce the time and expenditure required for their production. Methods of dissemination of documents and publications produced by the Organization are likely to expand into new forms, with greater use made of videocassettes, CD-ROM (compact disk-read-only memory), optical disc technology and other forms of "electronic publications". Despite the inconclusive results of pilot projects in teleconferencing in the 1970s, subsequent developments in this area, including the recent favourable experience of the International Telecommunication Union, warrant further study and analysis during the period to assess the suitability of the technique to the nature and conditions of United Nations meetings and conferences.

39.12 Innovations will not be limited to the application of technology. In consultation with author departments, a thorough review and analysis will be undertaken of the documentation requirements of the Organization, as well as of the problems giving rise to delays in the submission of documents and publications for processing. On the basis of that analysis, new measures will be initiated to control and limit the volume of documentation and to improve its quality and timely issuance.

39.13 In a similar vein, a thorough review and analysis will be undertaken of the meetings requirements of the Organization and of possible adjustments therein that could assist in alleviating the chronic problems that delay the issuance of documentation. Measures aimed at improving co-operation and co-ordination with substantive secretariats will be intensified in order to reduce wastage of resources and increase availability of stand-by arrangements, such as services and facilities required due to changes in the programme of meetings.

39.14 Efficient provision of conference and library services world wide clearly requires effective co-ordination between the various organizational units responsible for such services at different duty stations, all the more so with recent advances in communications and other technologies. In this context, and as noted above, the Department of Conference Services is given overall responsibility for establishing policies, procedures and practices for, and co-ordinating the provision of, conference services in the Secretariat. In addition, the Department provides the secretariat of the Committee on Conferences, which advises the General Assembly on all matters relating to the organization of conferences in the United Nations. The Department also provides the secretariat of the Publications Board which has Secretariat-wide responsibility for the publications programme of the Organization and for publications policy. In a similar vein, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library at Headquarters is responsible for co-ordination of library policies, including the introduction of technical innovations, with United Nations libraries away from Headquarters and co-operates with them on projects and activities of mutual interest. In addition to author departments and offices, conference-servicing units must also co-operate closely with substantive and technical secretariats of the various intergovernmental bodies serviced. In this

context, particular mention should be made of co-operation between the Department of Conference Services and the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Political and General Assembly Affairs and Secretariat Services, which, inter alia, is responsible for the editing of documentation for the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. Implementation of a programme of technological innovations will also involve close co-operation with the Office of General Services, which is responsible for planning and implementing telecommunications and technological innovations for the Organization, for providing overall policy and technical guidelines in matters relating to computers, office equipment and telecommunications and for enforcing standards set by the Technological Innovations Board. Co-operation will also be pursued between the Office of General Services and the Dag Hammarskjöld Library in respect of management of the archives of the Organization. Successful implementation of the proposed programme of technological innovations and other improvements will depend heavily on training, for which co-operation with the Office of Human Resources Management will be maintained. The special training programme for language staff, initiated in co-operation with the Office of Human Resources Management, will be continued and extended to the United Nations Office at Geneva and other duty stations and the criteria for recruitment of language staff will be updated and clearly defined, in close co-operation with the Office of Human Resources Management.

39.15 Active co-operation will also be pursued with other organizations of the United Nations system. Such co-operation will be pursued, inter alia, through the Inter-agency Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications, and the Dag Hammarskjöld Library will pursue its mandate to co-operate with other libraries within the common system on projects and activities of mutual interest. Continued co-operation with UNIDO and IAEA will also be sought in whatever arrangements are eventually agreed for conference and library services at the Vienna International Centre.

39.16 Co-operation with intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental organizations and enterprises outside the United Nations system, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the Federal Translation Bureau of Canada, and various institutions or commercial firms offering computerized data bases will be expanded, particularly in such areas as on-line data bases and external publishing.

3. Subprogramme structure and priorities

39.17 The programme on conference and library services will consist of the following subprogrammes:

- Subprogramme 1. Editorial and official records services
- Subprogramme 2. Meeting, interpretation and verbatim reporting services
- Subprogramme 3. Translation services
- Subprogramme 4. Publishing services
- Subprogramme 5. Library information services

The services provided under the subprogrammes constitute an integrated package of support for basic functions of the Organization; relative priorities, therefore, cannot usefully be assigned.

B. Subprogrammes

SUBPROGRAMME 1. EDITORIAL AND OFFICIAL RECORDS SERVICES

(a) Objectives

39.18 Under the general mandates outlined in paragraphs 39.1 to 39.3 above, subprogramme 1 deals with the editing of parliamentary documentation, including official records, and certain other documents and publications with the preparation of final texts for reproduction, and with the control of documentation and the monitoring of the processing of documents by conference services. It also covers the planning, organizing and managing of the introduction of technological innovations for all aspects of conference and library services.

39.19 Problems to be tackled during the medium-term plan period include finding ways to control and limit the volume of parliamentary documentation, to maintain high standards of quality for both parliamentary documentation and other publications of the Organization, to eliminate the backlog of official records at Headquarters and to maintain a coherent and effective programme of technological innovations.

39.20 The subprogramme will aim to ensure the timely issuance of parliamentary documents in correct form and with parity of treatment for all official languages, to control and limit the volume of documentation in compliance with directives of intergovernmental bodies, to ensure that the publications programme of the United Nations is implemented in compliance with the decisions and directives of the relevant intergovernmental bodies and that the publications are of high quality, to make the most effective and efficient use of resources available world wide, including through appropriate application of technological advances, for editing, translating, processing, reproducing and distributing United Nations documents and publications, and to eliminate the backlog of official records at Headquarters.

(b) Course of action of the Secretariat

39.21 By the end of 1991, the computer-based Document Records, Information and Tracking System is expected to be fully operational in New York and at Geneva, linking all units responsible for the processing of documents and publications, as well as linking other selected editorial units at Headquarters. The system is expected to improve planning and scheduling of work by providing current and accurate information concerning the status of each document and by providing statistics to facilitate analysis of the flow and distribution of work.

39.22 During the period 1992-1997, the introduction of a computer-based system of full-text transmission, using networked work-stations as a complement to the Document Records, Information and Tracking System, should lead to a significant reduction in the time required for processing parliamentary documentation at all duty stations. This system, linked to a reference and terminology data base, is expected to facilitate on-screen editing and to reduce the time required for referencing, particularly in respect of official records. To the extent that an

increasing number of documents will be received by the text-processing pools in electronic form, the time needed for the input of texts will also be reduced. The introduction of procedures in which text-processing pools send final corrected electronic documents to the publishing services for electronic typesetting and printing is also expected to reduce the total time required for processing documents.

39.23 These measures will also facilitate archiving and permit the establishment of an on-line data base containing the full texts of parliamentary documentation readily accessible to Member States and other external users, as well as to staff of the Secretariat. The introduction of optical disc technology for the storage and retrieval of parliamentary documents is expected to proceed in a phased manner during the medium-term plan period.

39.24 The quality of parliamentary documentation and other publications is also expected to be improved through the establishment of the full-text transmission system. There will be fewer possibilities for errors, since a text need not be retyped several times during its processing, and the readability and presentation of documents will improve, since it will be possible to reproduce documents electronically in typeset form. It is expected that, by the end of the medium-term plan period, a computer-based system for electronic typesetting in all official languages will be well established. In addition, the system, with its links to reference and terminology data bases, will permit more comprehensive and faster referencing of documents by editors and translators.

39.25 Other measures to improve the quality of documents and publications will include closer contact with author departments, which is particularly important in view of their increasing use of electronic publishing techniques, and the issuance of appropriate editorial guidelines. Greater co-ordination and supervision by the Department of Conference Services of the work of editors throughout the Secretariat is also planned. In addition to the editorial guidelines mentioned above, a revised version of the Editorial Manual will be prepared and issued in English and French during the medium-term plan period.

39.26 Concurrently, under the guidance of the Committee on Conferences, efforts will intensify to limit and control the volume of documentation in accordance with the relevant resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly and other intergovernmental bodies and to ensure compliance with their instructions. Monitoring of recurrent publications of the Organization will continue in order to identify any publications that may have lost their usefulness and should no longer be issued.

SUBPROGRAMME 2. MEETING, INTERPRETATION AND VERBATIM REPORTING SERVICES

(a) Objectives

39.27 Under the general mandates outlined in paragraphs 39.1 to 39.3 above, subprogramme 2 deals with the servicing of the Committee on Conferences, the planning and servicing of meetings, and the provision of interpretation and verbatim reporting services.

39.28 Activities under the subprogramme are likely to have to tackle the following issues and problems during the medium-term plan period:

(a) Following its retention as a permanent subsidiary organ of the General Assembly with new and broader terms of reference, the Committee on Conferences is likely to require more detailed expert assistance from the Secretariat, especially analytical material on all areas of conference servicing, and it may well be required to hold more meetings than previously;

(b) With increasing activity at the intergovernmental level, there is likely to be an increase in the number of informal meetings with a related increased demand for interpretation services, as well as an increasing fluidity in the scheduling of meetings;

(c) Periodic mismatches between the supply of conference services and the demand for them at different locations can be expected to recur;

(d) Conference facilities assigned to various intergovernmental bodies are frequently underutilized;

(e) Competing demands from non-United Nations users of free-lance interpretation staff are likely to cause difficulties in advance recruitment, owing to changes in dates and programmes; this can also affect the quality of the free-lance staff available;

(f) The number of meetings in technical fields, with special demands on interpretation capacity, is likely to increase;

(g) Provision of verbatim records in compliance with the rules of procedure of the Security Council and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly necessitates a high level of expertise in the services provided;

(h) Changes in the technological provision of all services at Headquarters will require updating in the Verbatim Reporting Service of the Department of Conference Services in order to ensure compatibility;

(i) There is loss of professional time in verbatim reporting, owing to continuing manual processing at some levels.

39.29 General Assembly resolutions and rules and principles governing conference planning set parameters for the demand for meeting services, such as entitlements with regard to duration of sessions, and to servicing, including written meeting records. In some cases, legislative authority also sets the timing and venue of meetings, for example, the regular sessions of the General Assembly at Headquarters. The existing "established" supply of conference services and facilities has some flexibility to meet that demand in that resources and services can be moved, both physically and through telecommunications. In addition, of course, it can be supplemented by temporary staff and services.

39.30 Within this framework, the subprogramme is intended to accomplish the following:

(a) To develop and plan the Organization's meetings programme in adherence with the resolutions, rules and principles of conference planning, and to ensure that the programme is designed in such a way as to allow for the most cost-effective use, world wide, of conference-servicing resources, centres and facilities for approval by the Committee on Conferences, and to implement that

programme, once approved by the General Assembly as the calendar of conferences and meetings of the United Nations;

(b) To reconcile the supply of and demand for conference-servicing resources through a determination of the meeting dates of the organs of the United Nations and their subsidiary bodies;

(c) To provide substantive services and analytical information to assist the Committee on Conferences in the fulfilment of its terms of references;

(d) To provide the organs of the United Nations and their subsidiary bodies with high-quality simultaneous and consecutive interpretation from and into the six official languages of the United Nations in the most cost-effective manner possible;

(e) To increase the linguistic flexibility of the interpretation staffing establishment and to decrease the response time to changes in the programme;

(f) To provide high-quality verbatim reporting services in the six official languages of the Organization for the Security Council, the General Assembly and other authorized bodies;

(g) To ensure high-quality and rapid processing of verbatim records.

(b) Course of action of the Secretariat

39.31 Demand for and supply of conference services at each location will be assessed and evaluated for each biennium of the medium-term plan period, and the draft calendar of conferences and meetings of the United Nations for each biennium will be designed accordingly for consideration by the Committee on Conferences.

39.32 A detailed analysis of the annual, monthly, weekly and daily meetings programme will be undertaken at each location to provide information on patterns of actual utilization by user, which would assist in the identification and reallocation of services for ad hoc requests. Each meeting will be analysed in terms of uniformity in application of standards in servicing, and its organization will be analysed in order to identify problems and to recommend and implement changes as appropriate for future meetings.

39.33 Efforts will be directed towards establishing a data base management system which, once established, will increase staff-time available for analytical tasks. The system will also reduce the time required for processing the various reports prepared under the subprogramme, thus making them available for secretariat and delegation use in a more timely fashion.

39.34 Statistical and analytical studies of conference-servicing resources, services and facilities and of the pattern of meetings of intergovernmental bodies will be undertaken and results will be communicated to substantive secretariats, as appropriate.

39.35 In order to ensure an appropriate level of expertise in the permanent interpretation staffing establishment, changes in technical requirements will be assessed on a continuing basis and training needs will be determined.

39.36 In order to improve uniformity and familiarity with current multilingual terminology among interpreters, electronic linkages to available terminology data bases will be established. Applications of computer technology, such as teleconferencing, will be investigated and implemented, as appropriate, in order to improve response time to changes in requirements.

39.37 In order to ensure the existence of a pool of qualified free-lance interpreters, changes in the free-lance market will be continuously analysed and rosters of qualified staff will be developed, as appropriate.

39.38 With regard to verbatim reporting, changes in requirements will be assessed and methodologies developed for ensuring the corresponding level of expertise in the permanent staffing establishment, including familiarity with multilingual terminology. Changes in the free-lance market will be kept under review and rosters of qualified staff will be developed, as appropriate.

39.39 Available text-processing equipment and electronic linkage to other conference-servicing units will be analysed so that appropriate changes that will reduce the time required for processing of verbatim reports may be formulated and implemented.

SUBPROGRAMME 3. TRANSLATION SERVICES

(a) Objectives

39.40 Under the general mandates outlined in paragraphs 39.1 to 39.3 above, subprogramme 3 deals with the translation into the six official languages of the Organization of parliamentary documentation and other material and with the provision for that purpose of reference and terminology services. In addition, a more limited range of translation and related services are provided in German on an extrabudgetary basis, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 3355 (XXIX) of 14 December 1978.

39.41 It is anticipated that the problems to be tackled in this regard will continue to include the late submission of documents by substantive departments, the poor quality or excessive length of some documents submitted, the unevenness of the translation work-load, owing to the bunching of meetings, the limited capacity of the translation services to translate from certain official languages, the increasingly technical nature of the texts submitted for translation, a shortage of skilled terminologists and the difficulties experienced in attracting and retaining the best available temporary staff, who remain an essential component of the operational capacity of the translation sector.

39.42 The main objective of the subprogramme will be to continue to ensure that the translation sector is staffed and equipped in such a manner as to ensure the equal treatment of the official languages of the Organization in the timely provision of translations of high quality. In order to enhance the quality of translations, it will be essential to keep abreast of developments in the field of terminology. In strengthening the translation capacity of the Organization during the medium-term plan period, a major objective will be to introduce machine-assisted translation, making full use of the new technologies available in the department or division in order to expedite the production of high-quality translations.

39.43 The previous medium-term plan period saw the preliminary phase of the introduction of new technology in the translation sector, generally concentrated in the area of terminology and reference. By the end of 1991, it is anticipated that a local communications network linking work-stations within translation services at Headquarters and at Geneva will have been established, permitting the electronic transmission of documents, as well as terminology and reference data; the first phase of an operational optical disc system at Geneva and at Headquarters will have been implemented, holding the promise of large-scale storage and retrieval of documentation which will be especially beneficial in the translation area; and the computer-based Document Records, Information and Tracking System will be fully operational, allowing more precise statistical data to be compiled.

39.44 The introduction of machine-assisted translation is expected to have significant effects on the method of work in the translation area, as well as in other areas of the production of documentation, both upstream and downstream, with the following results:

(a) The quality of work is expected to improve: on-line access to computer-based reference and terminology data bases, with full-text storage and retrieval, will reduce the time spent on research and alleviate some of the problems that were referred to above;

(b) In terms of quantity of work, the translators' output is expected to increase, especially with regard to documents that are repetitive in nature.

(b) Course of action of the Secretariat

39.45 The strategy for pursuing those objectives includes the following elements:

(a) Pilot projects will be developed in New York and at Geneva with a view to developing translation tools appropriate to each language;

(b) Special emphasis will be placed on terminology services, with due regard to the parity of treatment of the official languages. Through a major system improvement, terminology and reference data bases will be expended in all official languages and made available to a wider range of users;

(c) Automatic language/documentation identification and indexing tools will be developed to enable users to identify better the texts available in the optical disc system;

(d) All translation staff will have access, through a network, to the required data-base systems;

(e) Communications links will be developed so that contractual translators will increasingly have remote access to relevant terminology and reference data bases.

SUBPROGRAMME 4. PUBLISHING SERVICES

(a) Objectives

39.46 Under the general mandates outlined in paragraphs 39.1 to 39.3 above, subprogramme 4 deals with the final stages of the documentation process, namely,

printing, reproduction and distribution. As in the case of many other technical areas, these areas have been affected by far-reaching technological advances. The challenge facing the subprogramme, therefore, will be to harness these technological improvements as effectively as possible in improving the quality and timeliness of the materials produced, while minimizing the cost of operations.

39.47 The main aim of the subprogramme is to manage the introduction of new technology so as to achieve the most rational and cost-effective use of staff and equipment required for the preparation of manuscripts, typesetting, proof-reading, graphic and cartographic services, internal printing, distribution and provision of storage facilities and general-purpose printing and procurement.

39.48 During the medium-term plan period, activities under subprogramme 4 will also have the following aims:

(a) To improve the efficiency and timeliness of operations by computerizing all record-keeping functions at Headquarters and by establishing linkages both upstream and downstream for the tracking of sources of supply, jobs and invoices, as well as for budgetary monitoring. Appropriate modernization will also be pursued at other duty stations;

(b) To improve the appearance of publications by introducing a cohesive and unified graphics style that will establish a strong visual identity for all United Nations material;

(c) To integrate the preparation of maps with the electronic publishing and data-transmission networks of the Organization through the introduction of desktop mapping. Such capabilities will also permit the integration of statistical and demographic data, thereby providing the various sectors of the Organization with prompt and up-to-date carto-geographic information;

(d) To improve efficiency and timeliness in the reproduction area through computerized automation of the pre-press area at Headquarters. The introduction of an "electronic beam recorder" will be the first step in the application of an "image communication system" to implement direct digital transmission to and from the Reproduction Section. Appropriate modernization will also be pursued at other duty stations;

(e) To automate distribution activities appropriately, including through the application of optical disc technology;

(f) To promote the accurate and rapid identification of documents and publications through the development of a system of bar codes.

(b) Course of action of the Secretariat

39.49 Under the authority of the Publications Board, publishing policies will continue to be systematically reviewed and amended as necessary, thereby reflecting developments in the publishing field and in the Organization's publishing activities. Particular attention will be paid to making the publishing programme more effective and to attracting as wide a readership as possible.

39.50 The use of electronic publishing techniques will be implemented, thereby reducing reliance on external typesetting and increasing the efficiency and economy of the internal reproduction process. The introduction of electronic typesetting programmes, with the addition of personal computer-based desktop work-stations will permit faster and more economical production. Official records, in particular, will be produced directly from electronic data already corrected on word-processor terminals at the editorial stage. Automated insertion of typesetting specifications will generate laser printer output in camera-ready format. During this period, electronic work-stations will be introduced in the editing and copy preparation areas.

39.51 Editorial and typographical guidelines will be developed to ensure the creation of a uniform format and appearance by users of desktop publishing devices throughout the Organization. Those facilities should result in better information charting, graphing and presentation of statistical data, improvement in the quality of publications and facilitation of author usage of the extensive United Nations data bases to the fullest.

39.52 An integrated electronic data base approach to printing procurement, costing and planning will be developed at Headquarters, utilizing computer work-stations for the preparation of purchase orders, the payment of invoices and the tracking of works in progress. Suitable measures for modernization in this area will also be pursued at other duty stations.

39.53 The Cartographic Unit at Headquarters will refine and update its computerization of the cartographic process, keeping abreast and making use of new developments, while making available to end-users standardized machine-readable maps with official toponymy and boundary files. As the number of Member States that generate cartographic and geographic information in electronic form increases, the Unit will ensure the capability to receive that information.

39.54 In the area of reproduction at Headquarters, text and images will be transmitted electronically from the typing pools to the Reproduction Section, via cable, for processing by computer stations in that form. Thus linked to the existing automated projection plate-making device, the system that results will constitute a fully integrated computer-to-press operation. Retrofitting electronic controls on existing presses will be undertaken to reduce paper waste and improve the quality of the printing. Linkage of the Document Records, Information and Tracking System to the internal reproduction system will permit a more rational use of equipment and staff resources, ensuring the timely issuance of documentation in a more cost-effective manner. The introduction of optical disc technology, as well as eventual typesetting of documents, will affect the reproduction operation, but its full impact will have to be determined. Appropriate measures will also be taken to pursue modernization of reproduction facilities at other duty stations.

39.55 Information generated by the computerized inventory and stock control system at Headquarters will provide managerial data which, when analysed, will provide exact patterns of movement, utilization and distribution of the range of documents and publications produced. Computer terminals should be installed at the delegation and Secretariat distribution stations, integrally linked with both the Document Records, Information and Tracking System and United Nations Bibliographic Information System (UNBIS). It is anticipated that electronic distribution will supplement to a greater degree the current manual distribution of documents in hard copy through access to a new document-servicing centre based on optical disc

technology. Possibilities for modernization of distribution operations at other duty stations will also be explored.

SUBPROGRAMME 5. LIBRARY INFORMATION SERVICES

39.56 In its report on co-operation between and management of libraries of the United Nations system (A/39/299), the Joint Inspection Unit made a number of recommendations designed to improve the functioning and effectiveness of the libraries of the United Nations system. The Inspectors recommended establishment of an inter-library panel to help to develop a co-operative and effective network of United Nations system libraries and highlighted some issues for the panel to consider, including common indexing vocabularies and bibliographic control over the system's documentation; improved human resources planning for library staff; joint use of available and emerging technologies; strengthening effectiveness of depository library networks; and closer relations with information centre libraries, relevant UNESCO-supported programmes and international library organizations. The Inspectors also recommended the timely and well-planned application of new technologies and other management improvements, including emphasis on a more progressive and responsive approach; an effective and integrated library network within each organization, with necessary leadership, services and support provided by the central library; a clear definition of the library's responsibilities and functions within the overall information system of each organization; and the establishment and maintenance for each library of internal management objectives, work-load and staffing standards and analysis, longer-term planning process, and regular communication with users. In addition, the Inspectors made specific recommendations related to the United Nations Library at Geneva. In its report (A/39/603) on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions concurred with the Inspectors' view that there is need for closer co-operation between libraries of the United Nations system and recommended that the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination should review the matter further. The Advisory Committee noted that the recommendations concerned with management improvement and the introduction of new technology were generally endorsed by the Secretary-General and the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination. In its resolution 39/242, section III of 18 December 1984, the General Assembly concurred with the recommendations and observations of the Advisory Committee and requested the Secretary-General to implement them accordingly. In addition to the basic mandates outlined in paragraphs 39.1 to 39.3 above, therefore, subprogramme 5 continues to be guided by the approach thus endorsed by the Assembly.

39.57 The rapidly changing needs and increased prospects and possibilities in the information sector require that United Nations libraries continue a process of internal organizational restructuring and professional reorientation.

39.58 The subprogramme's principal aim is to enable the libraries of the United Nations to function as a network of co-operating information centres within a wider framework of co-operation with the libraries of other organizations of the system, on the one hand, producing and processing data, and on the other, supporting delegates, missions, Secretariat staff members and researchers from outside, in their needs for documentary and factual information.

(b) Course of action of the Secretariat

39.59 During the course of the medium-term plan period:

(a) User-oriented co-operation will be strengthened between the libraries of Headquarters, Geneva and Vienna and with the libraries of the other duty stations, for which support will be organized, particularly by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library. Various measures, including possibilities for staff rotation within and among libraries of the United Nations system, will be pursued in this context;

(b) A network of library information services of the United Nations system as a whole will be organized in close co-operation with the organizations involved. The growth in the range of interrelationships between technical subjects and the increasing possibilities for automation and telecommunications should make it increasingly feasible to share efforts and to exchange information among the libraries in the interest of the users systemwide. Such co-operation will be the subject of periodic meetings of the heads of libraries concerned;

(c) Improved co-operation with other international libraries, as well as more extensive use of non-United Nations services, will be pursued;

(d) Necessary co-operation will be pursued with the United Nations archives, especially to harmonize technological processing. The League of Nations archives at Geneva will be treated separately in order to offer an historical record of international relations to the community at large;

(e) The United Nations will promote access to its unrestricted information by bodies and persons outside the Organization, within the limits of the mandate of the United Nations library network;

(f) The libraries, in co-operation with the Department of Public Information, will seek the co-operation of the relevant United Nations offices in updating information facilities and providing professional training for librarians to ensure the availability of library information at depository libraries and United Nations information centres throughout the world;

(g) A coherent long-term programme of technological innovation will be carried out in respect of storage, retrieval and dissemination of United Nations information, as well as in respect of the management of library procedures;

(h) A dedicated system for integrated management and information for United Nations libraries will be installed, following a coherent plan and through co-operative preparations. It will be based on commercially available software and dedicated minicomputers at Headquarters and at Geneva, with batch transfer of the cataloguing and indexing data of the Geneva library to Headquarters. Such a library automation system, with adequate documentation and networking facilities and with an integrated approach to the various library management procedures, such as ordering, cataloguing, indexing, serials check-in, stock control and loans, is necessary for the enhancement of the UNBIS retrieval system. Reference tools, such as Indexes to Proceedings of the Security Council 1950-1963 and United Nations reference sources, will be issued by means of suitable output programmes;

(i) Appropriate linkage will be established between the dedicated library system and the Integrated Management Information System of the United Nations and its development and operation will be within the framework of co-operation established by the Advisory Committee for the Co-ordination of Information Systems;

(j) As part of the introduction of the optical disc system for storage and retrieval of documents, measures will be taken to enhance UNBIS, which will be used for full indexing to facilitate retrieval of documents;

(k) In order to minimize possible additional storage requirements for documents and publications and to preserve historical material, it is planned to transfer older documents to optical disc storage, requiring a corresponding retrospective conversion of non-machine-readable library data.

Notes

1/ See Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 49 (A/41/49), pp. 7-8.
