Control and Limitation of Documentation in the United Nations System

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The increasing volume of documentation produced by the organizations of the United Nations system poses serious problems which are too well known to require lengthy description here. The volume of documentation produced by the United Nations (New York and Geneva alone) reached 920 million page-impressions in 1979 and if one adds the documentation produced by other United Nations organizations the total exceeds 1.5 billion page-impressions. The cost of producing and distributing documents, excluding the cost of writing them, is now well over $100 million a year. If all the page-impressions of documents produced by the United Nations system yearly were laid end to end they would encircle the globe at the equator more than ten times. Annex I provides some statistics.

2. If a huge volume of documents were conducive to the clarification of the issues faced by the organizations of the United Nations system and to facilitating their solution, there would be no cause for concern. In fact, however, an excessive volume of documentation is a hindrance. It tends to obscure issues by diverting attention from essentials, and it complicates the work of intergovernmental and other meetings. At the same time, it greatly overburdens available staff resources and can cause serious delays in processing and delivery of documents. The efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the United Nations system would greatly improve if its volume of documents could be reduced, their quality were improved and they were issued on time.

3. The problems of documentation have repeatedly been considered by the General Assembly of the United Nations and the legislative bodies of other organizations of the United Nations system since their creation. Numerous resolutions on the subject have been adopted, but the volume of documentation has continued to increase, reaching in 1979 such a magnitude that at the thirty-fourth session of the General Assembly, during the discussion on administrative questions, it was stated that "the increase in documentation has become one of the most critical issues with which both Member States and the Secretariat are confronted". 1/

4. The Joint Inspection Unit has studied this problem in several reports. 2/ These were considered by the legislative bodies of the United Nations organizations and many decisions were approved by these bodies aimed at improving the situation. The Inspectors noted that many of the recommendations in JIU reports have been endorsed by the General Assembly and by the legislative bodies of other organizations of the United Nations system. Some of them need reiteration, whilst others, not yet fully implemented, remain valid and should be applied vigorously, bearing in mind their adaptation, where necessary, to the needs of each organization.

1/ A/34/320, para. 26.

2/ "Report on Documentation" (JIU/REP/68/5), "Report on a rationalization of the proceedings and documentation of the General Conference of UNESCO" (JIU/REP/69/4), "Report on the use of minutes instead of Summary Records" (JIU/REP/69/10), "Report on a rationalization of the proceedings and documentation of the Conference of FAO" (JIU/REP/70/1), "Report on a rationalization of proceedings and documentation of the World Health Assembly" (JIU/REP/70/8), "Report on the United Nations documentation and on the organization of the proceedings of the General Assembly and its main bodies" (JIU/REP/71/4), "Report on the implications of Additional Languages in the United Nations System" (JIU/REP/77/5), "Report on the Evaluation of the Translation Process in the United Nations System" (JIU/REP/80/7).

5.   Intergovernmental bodies in almost all organizations have for decades called for a reduction of documentation, but with little effect. Traditional methods for achieving this seemingly simple objective, which consist largely of exhortations and recommendations but not mandatory regulations and procedures for control of documentation, have not been successful.

6.   In carrying out this study the Inspectors have endeavoured to identify effective methods instituted and used by individual organizations of the United Nations system to control and limit documentation, to assess these methods and to recommend them for use, to the extent that they are applicable, by all organizations. This study does not apply to publications, because the problems related to them differ from those of documentation and perhaps deserve a separate study.

7.   In preparing this report, the Inspectors received valuable co-operation from the organizations of the United Nations system as well as from other intergovernmental organizations such as the European Economic Communities, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the League of Arab States, the Organization of African Unity and the Organization of American States. The Inspectors express their gratitude to all those who assisted them in this study.

II.   DOCUMENT CONTROL AND QUOTA SYSTEMS

8.   The figures in Annex I show that despite efforts to reduce documentation there has been a gradual overall increase. This increase in documentation is primarily the result of greater programme activity and a rise in membership. There are, however, other contributory factors, among which may be mentioned:

  (i)   the tendency to establish new bodies;

  (ii)   the desire to reinstitute certain meetings;

  (iii)   the need to produce more documents in each working language;

  (iv)   requests for additional information and more system-wide documentation. 3/

9.   There is little doubt that the current volume of documentation is too high and that efforts must be intensified to find solutions which will not only shorten some documents and eliminate others, but also improve quality and ensure timely production of documents.

3/ The General Assembly, for example, requested the Secretary-General to prepare 68 reports for the thirty-second session, 78 reports for the thirty-third session and 100 reports for the thirty-fourth session.

10. Many organizations have experimented over the years with a wide variety of systems to control the volume and improve the quality of documents and to ensure their issue on time. At present, rather complex systems exist in the United Nations, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the International Labour Office (ILO), the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization (IMCO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Health Organization (WHO), but no organization is satisfied that its system is sufficiently effective in attaining these aims.

11. Nevertheless, the document control and quota systems used in some organizations deserve serious attention because they provide the basis for a solution of the problem. A detailed explanation of the quota systems used in the past by FAO and UNESCO was given in a previous JIU report on documentation. 4/ Although those systems have since been modified, the basic principles are still worthy of note.

12. The main purpose of a document control and quota system may be described as:

- to allocate resources for document production according to the approved requirements of each unit of the secretariat and availability of funds, and to ensure that the resources are used effectively;

- to improve the quality of documents while reducing their length;

- to ensure the timely issue of documents in all working languages;

- to provide statistics on document production and costs.

13. To attain these objectives the system should have the following characteristics:

(a) The system should be as clear and simple as possible.

(b) It should be backed by the full authority of executive heads. All officials should clearly understand that it is their duty and in their interest to observe strictly the rules and procedures.

(c) It should aim at controlling only the critical steps in document production which most frequently cause delay.

(d) It should provide incentives for units that observe the rules and procedures, and penalties for those failing to do so. 5/

(e) It should require both parties to the production of documents (originating units and document processing services) to make commitments on the size and dates of preparation of each document and should lay down the procedure to be followed in the case of deviations.

4/ JIU/REP/71/4, paras. 270-277

5/ This proposal is now in force at UNESCO, following issuance of the Director-General's circular memorandum DG/Note/80/5 of 25 June 1980, para. 8.

14. The Inspectors consider that it would not be useful to suggest the details of a document control and quota system, except as examples where appropriate. Details would vary greatly between organizations according to their size, structure, activities, budgetary rules and procedures. JIU has already suggested the outlines of a suitable control and quota system in its report on "Evaluation of the Translation Process in the United Nations System" (JIU/REP/80/7 of April 1980, paras. 27 to 33). The Inspectors recommend that each organization review its document control procedures in the light of these suggestions and introduce changes so that they may better meet the purposes described above.

15. The best control and quota system will be of no avail if it is not properly managed and enforced. This is a function of what is called in most organizations the "Documents Control" unit (DOC). These units sometimes may not have sufficient authority to enforce controls or quotas. For the most part they merely monitor the flow of documents and prepare routine statistics. In many organizations they do not as a rule return documents of poor quality or excessive length to the origina- ting units. Each organization should strengthen its "Documents Control" unit and enhance its authority to apply more strictly the existing decisions, regulations and procedures for the control and limitation of documentation. Organizations with central editing units should relate them closely to "Documents Control" and thus facilitate and improve quality control of documents.

III. VOLUME OF DOCUMENTATION

16. The Inspectors noted that in many United Nations organizations there were no proper definitions of the terms "documentation" and "publications". This inevitably creates difficulties in the planning and production of documents and the establishing of an appropriate reporting system on the volume and cost of documents and publications. It is suggested that each organization should adjust its Manual so as to include a proper definition of the terms "documentation" and "publications", if this has not already been done.

A. Limits on the overall volume of documentation

17. An analysis of the methods used by various organizations to limit the volume of documentation shows that the most effective instrument is the Programme and Budget.

18. For the efficient use of this instrument it is necessary to proceed as follows:

(a) Before the Programme and Budget period begins each unit should be allotted a number of standard pages (or thousand-word units) for original documents and page-impressions for documentation in each language version for different types of meetings to be held during the budget period, according to the availability of funds.

(b) During the Programme and Budget preparations, each unit should work out its document forecasting plan indicating its planned pattern of document submission. Units should indicate the estimated volume of documents and propose resources for their production in the way they propose resources for other items of expenditure.

(c) These proposals, with any changes approved by executive heads and legislative bodies, should be considered an integral part of the budget preparation process.

19. If a unit in the course of executing its programme and budget finds that the volume of documents allotted is insufficient it would have the following alternatives:

(i) If the shortfall is caused by the unit's own actions, it should propose that it be financed by economies in its budget allocations for other items of expenditure.

(ii) If the cause of the shortfall is beyond the unit's control, e.g., the request of a legislative body for additional documents, the unit should attempt to meet the shortfall from its own resources. If this is not possible, the unit could apply to the executive head for additional resources within the approved budget.

The following paragraphs give examples of methods for limiting the volume of documentation which are applied by individual organizations.

20. In UNESCO, the total volume of documentation is apportioned between potential users (Programme Sectors, Bureaux, Offices, Executive Board and General Conference). These quotas are based on the average consumption of each user over a number of years. They are adjusted from time to time to take into account the capacity of Conference Services, the introduction of new languages, the extension given to languages already in use, etc. At the time (usually late in the year) when Programme Activity Details (PAD) for the forthcoming year are being worked out, each unit provides a list of its requirements and, if need be, they are adjusted, in close co-operation with Conference Services, to remain within the quota.

Within the quota system used in UNESCO there is a subsidiary quota specifyung the maximum number of pages which can be produced for each conference or meeting, according to its category. By a circular memorandum DG/Note/80/5 of 25 June 1980, the Director-General has given directives to reduce the volume of documentation produced by the organization for UNESCO's General Conference and Executive Board as well as for programme meetings and conferences. In the case of the latter, the volume of documents is to be reduced by 20 percent. Conference working documents are now limited to a maximum of 160 standard pages plus a maximum of 240 standard pages of background documents in the original language. Working documents for meetings are restricted to a maximum of 50 standard pages. For symposia, working documents are limited to a maximum of 160 standard pages plus a maximum of another 160 standard pages of background documents. No special documents except discussion programme or guide are allowed for the fourth category - seminars and training courses. Reports, which must be succinct, are allowed for the first two categories only.

21. **FAO** has a system similar to that of UNESCO for certain categories of meetings (e.g., a maximum of 70,000 words for regional conferences). In accordance with the approved Programme and Budget, units must work out their plans for the preparation of publications, main documents and working papers (papers for meetings are listed in three groups: (i) preparatory papers; (ii) sessional papers and (iii) final reports). This plan is presented on a form which indicates: point of programme or sub-programme, source of finance (RP, TF, UNDP, etc.), title of document or meeting, length of document in thousands of words, number of pages of tables, language, number of copies for unit's use and planned date of submission to the Publications Division (GIP). In separate columns the "Estimated total number of copies, quota and sales (for publication)", and "Estimated total cost" are indicated. These two columns are completed by GIP after consultations with the substantive unit. A copy of the FAO form is in Annex II. Later on the detailed programme of preparation of documentation for a given meeting is prepared and the Programming and Processing Control Section of GIP attempts to establish strict control over its implementation.

22. The **ILO** has no quota system, but since 1978 it has used a limited system of allotting each substantive unit certain "drawing rights" for internal central typing and reproduction services only. It allows for each substantive unit to know in advance the volume of services it may expect to receive. This system is applied to a limited number of documents, as it reflects the spare capacity of the Editorial and Document Services Programme after providing the mandatory services for the International Labour Conference, the Governing Body and other meetings scheduled by the Governing Body. The Documents Services Branch, which is responsible for typing, internal reproduction and distribution, writes twice a year to its client units to enquire about their requirements for the next six months, and to inform them of their utilization rate for the previous period. The planning and control of pre-session documents for meetings is done on the basis of an official schedule of approved meetings which contains all details concerning the production of documents (origin, length, languages, and timetable for the various stages of production).

23. In **WHO**, "the draft provisional agenda and the list of documents required for the World Health Assembly (WHA) and the Executive Board (EB), together with an indication of their length, are established by the Director-General in consultation with the Deputy Director-General and the Assistant Directors-General". 6/ Since 1976, measures have been taken by the WHO secretariat to reduce the volume of documentation for WHA and EB with the following results:

Table 1

Volume of documentation for WHA and EB

	Volume							
	1976	1977	% decrease compared with 1976	1978	% decrease compared with 1976	1979	% decrease compared with 1976
Number of standard pages (orig.doc.)	19,762	15,306	(-23)	18,198	(-8)	17,077	(-14)
Number of page-impressions (000s)	12,749	9,731	(-24)	10,346	(-19)	9,890	(-22)

6/ WHO Manual, V.3, p.1

In the case of technical documents, which constitute 60 percent of the total of WHO documentation, the Director-General decided in 1976 that there would be a 50 percent overall reduction in 1977. The Directors of substantive divisions were asked to set their own targets for that year, and again later for 1978. No specific targets were required of divisions in 1979. The following table shows the result of the directives:

Table 2

Volume of WHO technical documentation

	Volume						
	1976	1977	% de-crease (-) or increase (+) com-pared with 1976	1978	% de-crease com-pared with 1976	1979	% de-crease com-pared with 1976
Number of documents	2,057	2,066	(-)	1,533	(-25)	1,347	(-35)
Number of standard pages (orig.doc.)	41,388	42,791	(+3)	26,109	(-37)	27,748	(-33)
Number of page-impressions (000s)	15,243	10,052	(-34)	14,996	(-2)	12,282	(-19)

These figures show that the results of the attempt to reduce the volume of technical documentation at WHO Headquarters over the past three years fell short of the Director-General's target of 50 percent of the 1976 level, but that an appreciable reduction was achieved. However, the significance of the 19 percent reduction in page-impressions was diminished by the very substantial increase in the use of photocopies: from 6,069,000 in 1976 to 11,407,000 in 1979 (+88 percent). 7/

24. In view of the substantial increase in the volume of documentation produced by IMCO (from 9 million page-impressions in 1970 to 18.5 million in 1978), the Council of the Organization discussed the problem in May 1979. A decision was taken 8/, which specifies that all IMCO documents, whether prepared by Member States or by the secretariat, must be restricted to the indispensable minimum. Member States are asked to attach a summary of the bulky documents, which alone is translated, the documents themselves being made available only in the original language. 9/ It was also decided that in future the number of copies of documents sent to Member States would not exceed five.

7/ WHO letter N88/372/2, dated 30 January 1980.

8/ IMCO Council resolution C.63(XLII) of 25 May 1979.

9/ The same procedure is coming into force at UNESCO.

25. The Inspectors believe that, as demonstrated by WHO, the establishment of a maximum limit for an organization's documentation for a given period can produce useful results when a critical situation exists. However, such limits should be realistic and accompanied by a control system. In normal circumstances it would be preferable to use more traditional quota and control systems as suggested in chapter II.

B. Limits on size of various types of documents

26. In order to reduce the volume of documentation, some organizations have specified a maximum length for individual documents. The Economic and Social Council in 1979 adopted a number of practical measures on the control and limitation of documentation which are set out in its resolutions 1979/1, 1979/41 and 1979/69. In resolution 1979/41, the Council confirmed its previous decision of 1977 that the maximum length of documents prepared by the Secretariat should not exceed 32 pages and emphasized that "the 32-page rule for secretariat reports should apply to the document as a whole, including any annexes and appendices that may be required". The Office of Secretariat Services for Economic and Social Matters (OSSECS) decided to discontinue the use of waiver provision which existed in the original instruction of 1977. 10/

27. The General Assembly in resolution 34/50 of 23 November 1979 welcomed the actions taken by ECOSOC on the control and limitation of documentation and decided that they "should be applied to the General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies and that the Secretary-General should be requested to implement them fully".

28. The establishing of the 32-page rule by the United Nations represents strong and effective action to limit documentation. However, this rule needs further clarification concerning certain documents which clearly must exceed 32 pages, i.e., the Budget, the Medium-Term Plan, the World Economic Survey, the World Social Situation and some others.

29. At the same time, the United Nations Secretariat should prepare working instructions concerning a maximum length for each type of document. The circular "Guidelines for the preparation of documentation", issued by OSSECS contains a recommendation to the effect that "as a general rule, documents should contain not more than 15-20 pages". This recommendation is in the right direction so far as it goes but it does not go far enough. The next step in the limitation of individual documents should be directed to establishing reasonable limits for each group of Secretariat documents. The necessity for this was stressed by delegations at the Fifth Committee. One delegate stated, on 17 October 1979, that "More precise and detailed rules needed to be laid down, clearly distinguishing between various types of documents, drawing up a list of exceptions to the 32-page rule, and even proposing that the length of some types of documents should be restricted to 10, 15 or 20 pages". 11/

10/ In practical terms, 32 single-spaced pages in a final version of a document are the equivalent of 44 manuscript pages typed in one-and-a-half spacing. "Guidelines for the preparation of documentation", OSSECS/9, dated 12 September 1979, para.16.

11/ A/C.5/34/SR.19, page 8.

30. In the _ILO_, maximum lengths have been established for the different types of documents and publications. Details were given in ILO circular No. 12/25 of 18 January 1977. It provides, for example, the following maximum lengths in standard typewritten pages of 250 words:

- Programme and budget proposals   500
- Conference reports   from 90 to 260
- Reports for regional conferences   from 120 to 160
- Reports for regional advisory committees   100
- Reports for meetings of experts   75
- Reports for symposia and seminars   50
- Notes submitting reports of expert
  meetings to the Governing Body   10

31. In _FAO_, there is no limitation on the length of individual documents produced by the secretariat. However, the Director-General's bulletin No. 78/61 of 28 November 1978 established regulations concerning the wordage of documents. These regulations provide that "Division Directors should consult the Director of Publications Division (GIP) when preparing the Programme and Budget for each biennium to ensure a reasonable spread of documentation, translation and processing throughout the biennium, and the wordage required not only per meeting, but also for each document, should be carefully assessed. While some flexibility in length must be envisaged on advance estimates of wordage requirements, if a document exceeds the allocated length by 10 percent or more, it should be returned by the responsible Division Director to the originator of the document, for re-drafting".

32. In most organizations of the United Nations system no maximum length for various types of documents prepared by the secretariat has been established. Up to now, the legislative bodies and the executive heads of these organizations have not gone beyond admonitions and general calls to keep documents "as short as possible". Experience to date shows that these efforts have had only a limited effect. The Inspectors believe that substantial cuts in the volume of documentation could be achieved by establishing a maximum length for various types of documents.

33. The Inspectors consider that the type of reporting requested in resolution 1979/69 of ECOSOC, and endorsed by the General Assembly, concerning the implementation of the six-week rule should be extended to the implementation of the 32-page rule. The Council might wish to request the Secretariat to inform the Council and its subsidiary bodies, in the relevant annotated agenda, which documents have not been prepared in accordance with the 32-page rule and issued in accordance with the six-week rule, with an explanation of the reasons.

34. The Inspectors suggest also that other United Nations organizations, after establishing rules concerning maximum length of documents, should establish a procedure for ensuring effective control over the implementation of these rules. The procedure followed by the United Nations might be considered as a guide.

IV. QUALITY OF DOCUMENTS

35. The General Assembly and the legislative organs of other United Nations organizations have adopted numerous resolutions on documentation which, *inter alia*, contain detailed criteria for the preparation of reports, meeting records and other types of documents of the required quality. 12/ These criteria are still valid and so there is no necessity to repeat them here. It was on the basis of these criteria that "Guidelines for the preparation of documentation" referred to in para. 29 above were prepared. 13/ Many other United Nations organizations have established basic criteria for documentation.

36. Nevertheless, there have been frequent complaints that many documents are unclear, verbose and poor in style. In particular, the translation services have criticisms to make. This seems to indicate that efforts to improve the quality of documents have so far been insufficient. The Inspectors believe that further efforts are required to improve the quality of documents. They note that the directives recently issued in UNESCO say, *inter alia*, that "the documents which are too long or badly drafted will be returned to the responsible Assistant Director-General with a view to reducing their length or to improving their drafting" (DG/Note/80/5 of 25 June 1980, para. 2(c).).

37. In "Guidelines for the preparation of documentation" it is stated: "Considerable delays in the processing of a document have been frequently encountered due to the fact that the corrections to the document are still submitted long after its submission to OSSECS".

In the course of their study, the Inspectors came across cases where the "final text" of a document submitted for translation by the author-unit was translated into other working languages, and then at the request of the author-unit returned to it for re-drafting. Sometimes after this second version of the "final text" had been re-submitted and had been translated, the author-unit once again requested that this "final text" be returned to it for further re-drafting. This abnormal practice has happened, for instance, with documents E/AC.51/1980/CRP1 - re-drafted three times (41 pages); E/AC.51/1980/6 - re-drafted twice; A/C.5/35/1 - re-drafted twice; A/CN.1/4 - re-drafted twice (20 pages).

The repeated translation of a document owing to the poor quality of the "final text" received from the author-unit results in a considerable increase in the time and money required for its final processing. The Inspectors strongly support the provision in the "Guidelines" that "in order not to impede the scheduled processing of documents, once they are submitted to Documents Control, only corrigenda will subsequently be accepted". They believe that this rule could be applied by other United Nations organizations.

12/ See General Assembly resolutions A/1203(XII), A/2292(XXII), A/2538(XXIV), A/2856(XXVI) and A/33/56; FAO document: Director-General's Bulletin No. 78/61 of 28 November 1978; and UNESCO document: DG/Note/80/5 of 25 June 1980.

13/ In addition to the "Guidelines", the United Nations Secretariat issued many other instructions on the preparation of documents, including A/INF/35/1 containing a compendium of all decisions adopted by the General Assembly on the control and limitation of documentation through the years, and the series of editorial directives in documents ST/CS/SER.A/1-18.

38. An analysis of the situation shows that editing of documents and editorial control are insufficient. The organizational structures, the methods used and the categories of documents which are at present edited vary considerably among United Nations organizations. Some organizations have created central editorial services as part of their documents control units, whereas other organizations have established decentralized editorial services in substantive units. Still others have a combination of both practices whereby some substantive units have their own editors/technical officers but leave conference and governing body documents to central editorial control. In some comparatively small organizations there is no editorial service but documents prepared by the secretariat substantive units are usually edited by the heads of these units.

39. The Inspectors are of the opinion that each organization has made a choice regarding the structure of its editorial control service in accordance with its own requirements. The essential condition is that editors should be able to work closely with the authors of documents. This condition can be met under both centralized and decentralized structures, provided that both the author and the editor are located at the same duty station. However, they note that on average, editors at present control only a small percentage of the documents issued by the organization and the major problem to be resolved is the increase in editorial coverage.

Not all documents, of course, need to be edited. Short simple documents, those that are not translated and those written by authors of proven ability need not be edited. A decision in each case should be made by the chiefs of editorial control units in consultation with the substantive units concerned.

40. In order to improve the quality of documents, some United Nations organizations have established training courses in document drafting and editing for staff members involved in the preparation of documents. The Inspectors believe that all United Nations organizations should consider including such courses in their in-service training programmes.

V. PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION OF DOCUMENTS IN DUE TIME

41. Even documents of high quality lose their value if they are not produced and distributed on time to enable Member States to use them fully in considering given questions. "Failure to provide documentation in good time was detrimental to the smooth functioning of conferences and meetings" - said a delegate in the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly on 10 October 1979. [14] ECOSOC in its resolution 1979/1 of 9 February 1979 expressed deep concern at the fact that documents were too often not issued in due time in all the working languages.

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[14] A/C.5/34/SR.12 of 12 October 1979, p.11.

42. In recent years, to meet this concern of Member States, many organizations of the United Nations system have established rules regarding the submission of documents in good time by the originating units to Documents Control and their scheduled processing and distribution in the required languages. These rules differ from one organization to another.

43. In the United Nations, resolution 33/56 of the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General "to take measures to ensure that pre-session documents for meetings shall be distributed not less than six weeks before the meetings, in all languages, in so far as the subjects dealt with, the schedule of meetings or the reporting system allow". In order to ensure timely processing and distribution of documents, a rule has been made that documents must be submitted by the author-unit to OSSECS ten weeks before the meeting. Consequently, OSSECS has requested that manuscripts be submitted for approval by the head of the substantive department concerned twelve weeks before the relevant meeting.

44. The General Assembly has also decided that the Secretariat should inform the Assembly and its subsidiary bodies, in the relevant annotated agenda, of documents which have not been issued in accordance with the six-week rule, with a full explanation of the reasons which prevented their timely circulation. (Resolution 34/50 of 23 November 1979.) The Secretariat has also been requested to inform meetings if the documentation workload proposed at a particular time exceeds its technical capacity to process it.

45. In pursuance of this decision the Secretariat now issues reports on the state of preparedness of documentation for forthcoming sessions of the General Assembly, ECOSOC and their subsidiary bodies. For instance, the "Report on the state of preparedness of documentation for the first regular session of ECOSOC in 1980", scheduled for 8 April to 2 May, was issued on 11 March 1980. (Doc. E/1980/30/Add.1.)

46. The late submission of documents also results in an increase in overtime. The cost of overtime at United Nations Headquarters was as follows (in $ '000):

	1978	1979	% increase
Translation Division	49.1	54.7	11.4
Publishing Division			
(a) Reproduction section	227.0	275.4	21.3
(b) Printing service	0.1	4.1	-
(c) Distribution section	75.9	97.0	27.8
Sub-total	303.0	376.5	24.3
TOTAL:	352.1	431.2	22.5

47. ECOSOC resolution 1979/69 repeated once again the necessity for the Secretariat to adhere strictly to rule 13(4) of the rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Council, which says, that "unless the Council decides otherwise, if the documentation relating to an item of the agenda has not been circulated, in all working languages, six weeks before the opening of a regular session, the item shall be postponed to the following session, except in the

case of reports of subsidiary and other bodies on meetings that have been concluded twelve weeks or less before the opening of the session of the Council". This rule should be applied more actively by the United Nations in order that meetings may follow a more rational pattern.

48. The Inspectors believe that the rules on the timely issuing of documents established by the United Nations, including the mandatory reporting of the state of preparedness of documentation for forthcoming meetings of intergovernmental bodies, deserve the attention of United Nations organizations which have not yet established such rules.

49. The FAO Manual has set up the following scheduling of documentation for conferences and meetings: 15/

Category of meetings	Documents should be	
	submitted to GIP	distributed to the participants
	before the opening date of the meeting	
Regional conferences	3 months	2 months
FAO Conference	3 months	2 months
FAO Council	3 months	2 months
Other meetings	10 weeks	6 weeks

In order to minotor the implementation of these regulations, a system of fort-nightly internal reports on delays in the preparation of meeting documents has been established. In addition, GIP operates an "early warning" system for meetings under which the responsible division is requested 20 weeks before the opening of the meeting to submit a detailed documents schedule indicating the allotted wordage for each paper as well as dates of submission for processing.

50. The system at FAO provides that the Conference and Sessions Committee and the Publications Committee should co-ordinate and control documentation work. The Inspectors believe that so long as the final supervision remains the responsi-bility of these internal secretariat bodies any substantial improvement is unlikely. They consider that there is a need for the periodic reviewing of documentation by FAO intergovernmental bodies responsible for planning and imple-mentation of the Programme and Budget.

15/ FAO Manual, para. 701.224 and Manual, section 530, appendix C.

51. In the ILO, the following rules have been established for timely production and distribution of documents for the Governing Body: */

Types of documents	Documents should be	
	submitted to Official Relations Branch	distributed to the participants
	before the opening date of the meeting	
Policy papers	9 weeks	6 weeks
Other papers	5 weeks	3 weeks

*/Note: There are also rules concerning the production and distribution of documents for the International Labour Conference, regional ILO conferences and Industrial Committees.

If a document cannot be distributed within the time limits indicated above, the question whether it should be included in the agenda or postponed to a subsequent session must be referred for decision to the Director-General. 16/

52. The Inspectors observed that in the ILO the implementation of the Director-General's instructions on the length and timeliness of documents was left to middle management, which has no real power to take effective remedial action against overruns in the length of documents, while having nevertheless to meet deadlines even in cases where manuscripts are submitted well beyond the prescribed date.

53. In ICAO, the standing rules of procedure of the Assembly lay down that basic and supporting documentation on questions of general policy, air transport and air navigation matters should be received by Member States at least fifty days before the opening of an ordinary session of the Assembly. There is no specific dead-line for the submission of documentation for divisional-type meetings.

54. In IMCO, since 1979, the rules for the production and distribution of pre-session documents have been as follows. All documents prepared for a meeting are divided into two groups: first group - "bulky documents" (12 or more pages) should be distributed among participants not later than two months before the opening of the meeting; second group - "documents which do not involve matters of substance and are not bulky" (less than 12 pages) can be distributed as late as two weeks before the start of the meeting. The Inspectors were told that these "two-month" and "two-week" rules work well and that the Organization has no problem with the preparation of documents for meetings in accordance with the approved calendar.

16/ ILO Circular 12/2 of 29 December 1972.

55. The provisions of the UNESCO Manual relating to deadlines for the production and distribution of documents may be summarized as follows: 17/

Categories of meetings	Types of documents	Documents should be	
		submitted to Conference Services	distributed to the participants
		before the opening date of the meeting	
International conferences of States, intergovernmental meetings	A. Basic documents	7.3 months	6 months
	B. Other documents	12 weeks	6 weeks
Advisory and experts committees, seminars, symposia	A. Basic documents	4.5 months	3 months
	B. Other documents	10 weeks	4 weeks

56. In WHO, a six-week rule is normally applied to the distribution of conference documents and is respected, by and large, for pre-session documentation. There is no fixed time-limit for submission of the final text of documents by originating units for processing (clearance, editing, translation, reproduction). This is usually established by negotiation between the originating units and the Secretariat Committee on Documentation and Conference Support Services. This committee, through its working group, monitors the preparation of WHA and EB documents at all stages from drafting to distribution, and solves any problems. It usually takes from two to three weeks to process a document. This task is facilitated by the comprehensive production form made out for each document (see annex III). Copies of the form (in different colours) are sent to all the units concerned. The "Clearance and Routing" part of the form indicates all those concerned, from the originating unit to the Director-General. This helps in establishing strict control over the timely production and distribution of documents.

57. In order to meet the established deadline for the submission and distribution of documents, many United Nations organizations use temporary assistance and contractual services for translation and typing of documents. A detailed analysis of contractual services for translation was given in the JIU report on Evaluation of the Translation Process in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/80/7, paras. 56-69).

The Inspectors consider that the organizations should analyse thoroughly the costs incurred for regular staff, temporary assistance and contractual services for translation and typing of documents and, without sacrificing basic quality, select, according to circumstances, the solution that is cost-effective.

17/ UNESCO Manual, items 810, 815, 820, 825, 830 and appendix II.E.

VI. REDUCTION IN NUMBER AND DURATION OF MEETINGS

58. There is a general consensus that the volume of documentation produced depends to a great extent on the number and duration of meetings. For instance, the number of meetings serviced by UNOG increased from 6,013 in 1976 to 8,594 in 1979 (or by 42.9 percent) and the documentation produced by UNOG increased from 240.7 million page-impressions to 301.0 million (or by 25 percent) during this period.

59. In its resolution 33/55 of 14 December 1978, the General Assembly requested United Nations bodies to review the length and cycle of their sessions with a view to exploring the possibilities of shortening them and of meeting on a biennial basis or less frequently. The Inspectors feel that such possibilities exist in many United Nations bodies, as according to the available data, on average about one third of the time allotted to the United Nations bodies was wasted due to late start, early ending of meetings as well as of cancellation of scheduled meetings.18/

60. Some United Nations organizations have achieved a substantial reduction in the volume of documentation by reducing the number and duration of meetings. FAO reduced the number of meetings from 408 to 253 in 1976-1977, and this resulted in a significant reduction in the volume of documentation and a saving in costs of 27 percent (from $5.31 million to $3.87 million). ILO showed a considerable reduction in the volume of internally produced documentation - from 135 million page-impressions in 1976-1977 to 100 million in 1978-1979 (or by 26 percent). This reduction in documentation coincided with a decrease in the number of meetings during the period 1978-1979.

61. ECOSOC, by its resolution 1979/81 of 3 August 1979, decided to reduce the duration of its regular sessions by one week and requested its functional commissions and standing committees to reduce theirs also. The Governing Council of UNDP at its twenty-seventh session decided that, on an experimental basis, the duration of the twenty-eighth session of the Council will be reduced from four to three weeks. The Council also adopted measures aimed at improving the quality of documents and the better organization of the proceedings of the next session (resolution 80/55 of 30 June 1980).

62. The thirty-third World Health Assembly in May 1980 considered the periodicity of Health Assemblies. It requested Member States to give careful attention over the coming year to the constitutional changes required to permit the holding of biennial instead of annual Health Assemblies. It recommended that the next session of WHA in 1981 consider amending the Constitution in order to permit the proposed changes. It also expressed the belief that, as soon as possible in the meantime, Assemblies in the even years (when there is no full Programme Budget to consider) should be limited to not more than two weeks' duration (resolution WHA 33.19 of 23 May 1980).

18/Report of the Committee on Conferences. Official records of the General Assembly, Thirty-Fifth session, supplement N.32 (A/35/32, paras. 24-25).

63. The Inspectors welcome this trend towards a reduction in the number and duration of meetings and suggest that all United Nations organizations should periodically review their calendars of conferences and meetings with a view to reducing their number and duration, without impairing the efficiency of their activities. 19/

VII. OTHER MEASURES FOR REDUCING AND RATIONALIZING DOCUMENTATION

A. Summaries of documents

64. The increasing volume of documentation, as mentioned above, creates serious problems not only for secretariats but for Member States as well. The difficulties encountered by delegations, in particular the smaller ones, which are expected before and during meetings to absorb the contents of numerous documents, increase further the counter-productive effect of this excessive volume of documentation.

65. Many United Nations organizations have identified the need to include in their documents summaries, highlighting points for action and decision.

(a) In FAO, all documents for the Conference and the Council are prefaced by a summary not exceeding half a page. At the beginning of the reports of Council committees a short text is usually inserted under the heading: "Matters requiring attention by the Council".

(b) In UNESCO, documents for the Executive Board and the General Conference contain a brief summary in a "box" on the cover page indicating the origin, purpose and contents of the document and any points for action and decision.

(c) In WHO, the cover-page of most WHA and EB documents has a "box" containing a brief summary of the contents and indicating the issue at stake.

(d) ICAO follows the practice similar to that of WHO.

(e) In IMCO, as mentioned in para. 24 above, in the case of bulky documents submitted by Member States, they are asked to attach summaries which alone are translated, the documents themselves being made available only in the original language.

(f) In ECLA, a selective approach concerning translations is complemented by a system of summaries which are translated and distributed for information.

(g) In UNEP, the reproduction of documents in the original language only is complemented by a booklet containing summaries in English and French.

19/The Inspectors were told that a beginning has been made in this direction in FAO whose Council now regularly reviews the scheduling of its own meetings and the meetings of its subsidiary bodies.

66. The Inspectors believe that the practice of summarizing documents over a certain length in FAO, UNESCO, WHO, ICAO, IMCO, ECLA and UNEP might be studied by other organizations with a view to their general application with or without modification as appropriate. It may be argued that summaries have the effect of increasing the length of documents and are time-consuming to write. This argument has some merit but it must be weighed against the following advantages:

(a) The recipients of documents are as a rule busy people who do not have time to read everything. They require a brief description of the contents and the points for decision which will help them to decide whether to study the document in detail.

(b) Summaries are essential for the storage and retrieval of information by computer-assisted systems.

B. Verbatim and summary records

(a) Verbatim records

67. Some organizations produce the complete transcript of speeches (verbatim records) and discussions of their highest intergovernmental body as documents. In the United Nations, verbatim records of the plenary meetings of the General Assembly and the Security Council are prepared. They are issued initially in provisional mineographed form for limited distribution and later in printed form, with corrections by delegations and editorial changes incorporated, for general distribution. Verbatim records, but issued only once in final form, subject to the issuance of consolidated corrigenda covering a session or series of meetings are also provided for some United Nations bodies such as the Trusteeship Council, the First Committee of the General Assembly, its Special Political Committee (on a selective basis only) and some of its subsidiary organs. 20/ The preparation of verbatim records in printed form at present takes a long time; they are usually issued about three years after the meeting and by which time they have lost all but historical and archival value.

68. In order to produce verbatim records in time the United Nations Secretariat (New York) spends a substantial sum of money on overtime in the Department of Conference Services due to the large volume of work during the General Assembly sessions and other meetings. The cost of overtime for 1978 and 1979 was as follows (in '000 s):

	1978	1979	% increase
Interpretation and Meetings Division	27.5	34.9	28.9
Editorial and Official Records Division – Stenographic Service	380.8	522.3	37.2
TOTAL:	408.3	557.2	36.5

69. In WHO, verbatim records are made of the plenary meetings of the World Health Assembly. They are issued immediately in a single multilingual text in six working languages, and later translated and issued separately in each language. In ILO, verbatim records are prepared of the plenary meetings of the International Labour Conference.

20/ The list of the United Nations bodies using verbatim and summary records is given in document A/AC. 172/31 of 1 April 1980, annex I.

70. UNESCO has adopted a multilingual system for the final edition of verbatim records of the plenary meetings of its General Conference: speeches in English and French are no longer translated but those in Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Spanish are translated into either English or French, and the translations follow the texts of the speeches in the original language. Consequently, there is a single volume of verbatim records of the General Conference in all official languages.

In FAO, verbatim records are issued for the plenary meetings of the Conference and its Commissions and the meetings of the Council. FAO's practice is close to that of UNESCO: FAO verbatim records, provisional and final, are trilingual (English, French and Spanish).

71. The Inspectors believe that it would be worthwhile for the United Nations organizations which now issue verbatim records separately in each working language to consider introducing the multilingual system.

(b) Summary records

72. In the United Nations, summary records are prepared for the General Committee of the General Assembly, as well as its Main Committees other than the First Committee (which receives verbatim records), the plenary meetings of the Economic and Social Council and meetings of its Sessional Committees, the subsidiary organs of the Security Council, some of the subsidiary organs of the General Assembly and ECOSOC (see para. 74 below), the Trade and Developing Board, the Industrial Development Board and some affiliated bodies such as the Governing Council of UNDP.

73. In UNESCO summary records are provided only for the plenary meetings of the Executive Board, in a multilingual version as with verbatim records (see para. 70). In WHO, summary records are provided for the meetings of the Executive Board and the two main Committees of the World Health Assembly. Two of the six WHO regional committees (Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean) have dispensed with summary records. The Inspectors suggest that those WHO regional committees which continue to provide summary records should consider dispensing with them.

74. Over the years the legislative bodies of the organizations of the United Nations system have tried repeatedly to reduce their meeting records. In 1969, 1971, 1976 and 1978, the General Assembly adopted resolutions which dealt, inter alia, with this subject. 21/   In 1979, ECOSOC decided to discontinue, for an experimental period of two years, summary records for its fifteen subsidiary organs. 22/   The General Assembly endorsed this ECOSOC decision and in its own resolution 34/50 decided upon a similar course of action for an experimental period of one year, with the exception of the International Law Commission and the Committee of the Whole (see A/34/PV.76 and Decision 34/418.)

75. Later on, however, at the request of the Commission on Human Rights, ECOSOC decided that summary records would be reinstated for the Commission and for the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, commencing with the thirty-seventh session of the Commission and the thirty-third session of the Sub-Commission (E/Res. 1980/133 of 2 May 1980).

21/ A/Res. 2538 (XXIV), 3415 (XXX), 31/140, 33/56

22/ E/Res. 1979/69 dated 2 August 1979.

The General Assembly by its resolution 35/10 B of 3 November 1980, confirms the continued applicability of its resolution 34/50 in respect of summary records for all those subsidiary organs of the Assembly for which the provision of summary records was discontinued, and decided to grant exceptions from this rule for seven subsidiary organs, subject to review at the thirty-sixth session of the General Assembly on the basis of recommendations of the Committee on Conferences and in the light of experience gained.

76. The Inspectors consider that the decisions adopted by ECOSOC and the General Assembly to discontinue summary records for their subsidiary organs contribute substantially to reducing documentation and to an improvement in the timely production of documents by the Secretariat. 23/ They recommend that after the experimental periods these decisions be retained on a permanent basis.

77. The Inspectors recommend also that the legislative bodies of the United Nations organizations should follow the General Assembly and ECOSOC decisions on meeting records and call upon all their organs to review periodically the requirements for them and, whenever possible, to dispense with verbatim and summary records. The fact that the proceedings of legislative bodies are recorded on magnetic tapes makes discontinuation of meeting records more possible. The Inspectors consider that the secretariats of the United Nations organizations should be more active in advising intergovernmental organs on measures to limit meetings' records.

C. Discontinuing production of redundant documents and issuing some other documents at less frequent intervals

78. In many of its resolutions the General Assembly has urged intergovernmental bodies to review all their recurrent documents to determine whether they have become redundant, have lost their usefulness, or could be issued at less frequent intervals. The Inspectors saw no evidence of these resolutions being implemented.

79. It would be desirable for the intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations and other organizations of the United Nations system, when discussing proposals for the preparation of additional documents, to consider whether it would be possible to discontinue some documents - especially recurrent documents - which are deemed to be redundant or of marginal usefulness.

80. The Inspectors note with satisfaction that the United Nations Secretariat "stands ready to assist the Committee in making such evaluations by providing specific information as to the contents of related documents under preparation and as to the possibilities of combining two or more reports into a single document". 24/ They consider that the Secretariat of the United Nations as well as the secretariats of other United Nations organizations should play a more active rôle in advising intergovernmental bodies on means to limit documentation, and particularly, in preparing lists of documents which have become redundant, have lost their usefulness or could be issued at less frequent intervals.

23/ It was noted in the report of the Committee on Conferences that the absence of summary records had contributed to a sizable reduction in documentation (A/35/32, para.34).

24/ A/C.2/34/L.3; A/C.3/34/L.3 dated 1 October 1979.

81. The intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations organizations should include this question on the agenda of their meetings regularly every two or three years. These bodies might wish to request their secretariats to exercise their judgement and identify such documents.

D. Reproduction and distribution of documents

82. Reproduction and distribution of documents are areas where real possibilities exist for reducing page-impressions. These are also areas where the secretariats of the United Nations organizations , could be effective in defining the number of copies of documents to be reproduced and distributed. The rules established for the reproduction and distribution of documentation vary from one organization to another.

83. In the United Nations, the distribution of documents is governed by an Administrative Instruction issued in 1973. 25/ This instruction appears to need revision aimed at reducing the number of copies of documents and publications distributed free of charge. The Inspectors believe that such a revision should set a more definite limit on the number of copies for distribution under the "General", "Limited", and "Restricted" categories, which are now distributed "in accordance with requirements" or "upon request".

84. They believe also that the number of copies of documents distributed to Secretariat units at United Nations Headquarters, which now average 350 copies for each unit, should be established on the basis of real requirements. To this effect, Executive Officers of units should carefully assess the unit's requirements and review periodically their requests for copies of documents as needs change.

85. Table 3 contains data on the distribution of documents in the United Nations (New York and Geneva) in numbers of copies of documents distributed:

Table 3*

Number of copies of documents distributed by the
United Nations Secretariat

	1977	1978	% increase over 1977	1979	% increase (decrease) over 1978
UN HQ (New York)					
Initial	31,749,625	33,979,604	+7.0	38,284,609	+12.7
Secondary	8,780,025	9,047,996	+3.1	9,979,248	+10.3
Sub-total	40,529,650	43,027,600	+6.2	48,263,857	+12.2
UN Office at Geneva					
Initial	16,689,603	16,715,345	+0.15	15,588,603	(-6.7)
Secondary	5,507,434	6,731,857	+22.2	5,363,238	(-20.3)
Sub-total	22,197,037	23,447,202	+5.6	20,951,841	(-10.6)
TOTAL:	62,726,687	66,474,802	+6.0	69,215,698	+4.12

25/ST/AI/189/Add.3/Rev.1 of 1 February 1973. *Source: Conference Service statistics, New York and Geneva

86. The figures in table 3 lead to the following observations:

(a) During the last three years there has been a progressive
growth in the number of copies of documents distributed
at United Nations Headquarters and, particularly, in the
number secondarily distributed.

(b) In 1978, there was a much bigger increase in the number
of secondarily distributed copies of documents at UNOG
than in UN/NY. However, strong measures taken by UNOG
Conference Services in 1979, aimed at effective control
over the distribution of copies of documents at meetings,
reduced the total number of distributed documents sub-
stantially.

87. There are some reasons why delegations to meetings may require second copies
of documents. However, the Inspectors feel that the United Nations Headquarters
Secretariat should consider the situation thoroughly and in co-operation with
Member States work out measures for reducing substantially the number of copies
of documents for initial and especially for secondary distribution, as has been
done by UNOG.

88. The reproduction of documents in excessive number of copies results, of course,
in an increase in costs. For example, in UNOG approximately 30 tons of surplus
documents are destroyed every year, representing about 12 million page-impressions.
It is necessary to take measures to ensure that the number of copies of documents
made should be strictly in accordance with actual needs.

89. A positive experiment in reducing the number of copies of documents has been
made by IMCO. In 1969, the IMCO Council asked all Member States to reduce to no
more than two the number of addressees to whom documents were to be sent. There
had not previously been any restriction in this area. This measure was put into
effect progressively beginning in 1970. In 1979, the Council decided that "the
number of copies of documentation for meetings of organs and bodies of IMCO circu-
lated by the Secretariat should normally not exceed five copies for each
Government". 26/ The Inspectors believe that the experience of IMCO deserves the
attention of other United Nations organizations seeking ways to reduce the number
of copies of documents distributed.

E. Modern Documentation Technology

90. In some United Nations organizations the problem of documentation has become
so serious that administrative measures are not enough to solve it. In addition
to strengthening administrative control, organizations are taking steps to use
modern machinery to meet growing document requirements.

91. In the United Nations, Conference Services "are very obsolete in various areas,
especially that of modern documentation technology - reproduction, processing,
storage and retrieval of information and documentation". 27/ The partial intro-
duction of modern technology into various phases of the processing of documentation

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26/ IMCO Council resolution C.63 (XLII) dated 25 May 1979.

27/ From the statement of Mr B. Lewandowski, Under-Secretary-General for
Conference Services and Special Assignments, at the Committee on Conferences on
21 April 1980.

in the United Nations Secretariat has already given positive results. Actions are under-way to introduce a computerized system in UNOG's Conference Division for collecting and monitoring documentation statistics.

92. UNIDO has had a computerized document control system since the beginning of 1980. Its purpose is to facilitate the monitoring of document processing services and the collecting of statistics. The system can further be used for producing lists of documents according to various criteria; later it will also allow for cost accounting. UNIDO believes that a computerized planning device would be an additional advantage.

93. Since 1970, UNESCO has undertaken many studies and has acquired practical experience with modern memorizational equipment, especially during the sessions of the General Conference. In 1977-79, a technologically-advanced system (IBM-6) was utilized for real production in both the English and French composition units. A number of documents were thus produced, including the final version of the Executive Board's summary records in 1978 and 1979 and of the General Conference's verbatim records at its twentyth session (1978); the latter (1,160 printed pages) were issued eight months earlier than in past instances. The utilization of this modern equipment represented - in addition to the saving in time - an economy in typing, checking and mounting of some 1,500 standard pages. In 1980, a more sophisticated computerized documentation technology (IBM-3730) was used in the French composition unit during the twenty-first session of the UNESCO General Conference.

94. ITU reported positive results from the use of modern memorizational equipment. This equipment not only speeds up the production of documents and avoids repetitive work, but also saves money as the need to use outside printing is eliminated.

95. In the United Nations (New York and Geneva), FAO, ILO, UNESCO and some other United Nations organizations, Conference Services are increasingly using both sophisticated computer-assisted systems and relatively simple methods such as microfiches for document storage, reproduction and reference needs.

96. The Inspectors are, of course, aware of the financial implications of intro- ducing modern document technology. They would like to suggest that the organiza- tions should undertake thorough studies of the cost effectiveness of modern document technology and then take a decision.

VIII. CONTROL BY INTERGOVERNMENTAL BODIES

97. As will be seen from the preceding chapters, the secretariats of most United Nations organizations have repeatedly attempted to establish limits for the volume of documentation and improve the quality and timeliness of documents. However, the Inspectors were told that it was difficult for the secretariats to enforce decisions of this kind in respect of documents submitted by Member States.

98. Experience in many organizations has shown that whatever the measures the secretariats may accept for the control and limitation of documentation, they should be reviewed periodically by appropriate intergovernmental bodies. This review might concentrate on results, particularly in respect of documents for meetings, as regards size, timeliness, quality, and the extent to which documents meet the requirements of meetings. The effect on costs should also be considered.

99. While reviewing documentation, intergovernmental bodies should take account of the view expressed to the Inspectors by several secretariats that considerable reduction in the volume of documentation could be achieved if Member States and delegates would reappraise and consequently reduce their requests for documents.

100. In its resolution 34/50 of 23 November 1979 the General Assembly requested the Committee on Conferences to monitor the implementation of all measures adopted by the Assembly to control and limit documentation. For this purpose, the Committee on Conferences is authorized to verify to what extent these measures were applied in practice, whether tangible results of their application can be identified and to report to the General Assembly. By its resolution 35/10A of 3 November 1980 the General Assembly requested the Committee on Conferences to study the possibility of establishing effective mechanisms to enforce all existing rules to control and limit documentation with a view to ensuring the timely availability of documentation in all working languages.

101. In view of the increasing involvement of the Committee on Conferences in the area of documentation, the Inspectors consider that it would be worthwhile: (a) to change the title of "The Committee on Conferences" to "the Committee on Conferences and Documentation"; (b) to extend the terms of reference of this committee to include more detailed provisions related to the various phases of the document production process.

102. The Inspectors suggest that the other United Nations organizations, particularly the larger ones, consider entrusting one of their intergovernmental bodies with tasks similar to those of the United Nations Committee on Conferences in the area of documentation in the light of their own requirements and their specific activities.

IX.   INTERAGENCY CO-OPERATION IN THE FIELD OF DOCUMENTATION

103. At present, interagency co-operation in the field of documentation takes place within the framework of the Interagency Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications (IAMLADP) convened on an ad hoc basis by the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination. However, only once, at the IAMLADP meeting in 1974, did the representatives of United Nations organizations discuss some aspects of the control and limitation of documentation. 28/

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28/ Report of the Interagency Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation, and Publications, COORD/R.1062/RESTRICTED of 3 October 1974.

104. The Inspectors feel that in the general context of interagency co-operation in the field of documentation little consideration was given to such questions as reducing the volume of documentation, issuing documents in good time in all working languages and improving the quality of texts, where an exchange of information on policies and methods might be of particular benefit.

105. The Inspectors also feel that most of the organizations favour co-operative action in these areas and that the machinery of ·IAMLADP is sufficient for the purpose. Accordingly, it should assume greater responsibilities in this regard and be more active in instituting and improving interagency co-operation in the field of documentation.

106. The Inspectors suggest that the terms of reference of IAMLADP should include responsibility for identifying effective methods of control and limitation of documentation adopted by individual organizations, assessing them in the light of the general and individual requirements of the organizations and proposing those which it considers suitable for general application.

X. SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

107. The increasing volume of documentation produced bd the United Nations system poses serious problems for Member States and secretariats. In spite of numerous decisions adopted by the General Assembly and the legislative bodies of other United Nations organizations, the problems have not yet been solved. Member States have called frequently for a reduction in the volume of documents, an improvement in their quality and their issuing in good time, but with little effect. This failure to arrest the growth of documentation and its late distribution is largely explained by the fact that up to recent times these calls were exhortations, not mandatory decisions.

108. Since 1979, when the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly adopted resolutions on the control and limitation of documentation, positive, though modest, results have been achieved in reducing the overall volume of documentation in the United Nations. Some other organizations also have recently taken mandatory decisions aimed at reducing the volume of documents, improving their quality and ensuring their distribution in good time.

109. The Inspectors believe that the most effective instrument for the control and limitation of the volume of documentation is the Programme and Budget. A practical way to a successful use of this instrument is to apply a quota system, backed by the full authority of the executive heads.

110. The volume of documentation to a great degree depends on the number and duration of meetings. Some United Nations organizations have succeeded in reducing their documentation through cutting the number and duration of meetings. The frequency of some conferences and meetings could be reduced without harm being done but with substantial economies in resources.

111. In order to improve the quality of documents many organizations have established editorial control services. These services need to be strengthened if they are to play their rôle successfully. The organization of training courses in document drafting, and in editorial work, is another means which can help in improving the quality of documentation.

112. One of the most serious problems of documentation concerns the timely issuing of documents. Most organizations have established guidelines and rules for the preparation, processing (i.e., editing, translation, typing, printing, reproduction) and distribution of pre-session documentation, including deadlines for the submission of documents to Conference Services and for their distribution. A weakness of these guidelines and rules is usually that "Documents Control" has no authority to enforce their implementation.

113. In some United Nations organizations there is no clear distinction between documents and publications, and this creates difficulties in recording the volume and cost of each category.

114. Up to now the problems of documentation have not been considered sufficiently at interagency forums. In particular, the Interagency Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications has not paid due attention to such aspects of documentation as volume, quality and timely issuance of documents.

XI. MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Recommendations which require decisions by the legislative organs of the United Nations organizations

Recommendation 1: The intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations organizations should periodically review their calendar of conferences and meetings with a view to reducing their number and duration and their frequency, in order, _inter alia_, to achieve a reduction in the volume of documentation without impairing the efficiency of their activities, (paragraph 63).

Recommendation 2: The procedure established in ECOSOC resolution 1979/69, and endorsed by the General Assembly, concerning the implementation of the six-week rule should be extended to the implementation of the 32-page rule (paragraph 33).

Recommendation 3: Those organizations of the United Nations system which have not yet established rules concerning maximum length of various types of documents should consider establishing such rules as well as a procedure for ensuring effective control over their implementation (paragraphs 32, 34).

Recommendation 4: The rules established by the United Nations on the timely issuance of documents deserve the attention of those United Nations organizations which have not yet established such rules (paragraphs 43-48).

Recommendation 5: United Nations organizations which now use the system of issuing verbatim records in each working language should consider introducing the multilingual system (paras 70 and 71).

Recommendation 6: Discontinuance of the summary records of the subsidiary organs of ECOSOC and of the General Assembly should, after the experimental periods, be retained on a permanent basis (paragraph 76).

Recommendation 7: The legislative bodies of the organizations of the United Nations system should consider dispensing with verbatim and summary records for their bodies whenever possible. They might also request their secretariats to play a more active rôle in advising intergovernmental bodies on measures to limit meeting records (paragraph 77).

Recommendation 8: It would be desirable that the intergovernmental bodies of United Nations organizations include in the agenda of their sessions regularly the question of discontinuing production of recurrent documents which have become redundant or have lost their usefulness, and issuing some documents at less frequent intervals. These bodies might wish to request their secretariats to exercise their judgement in identifying such documents (paragraphs 79-81).

Recommendation 9: In the United Nations, it would be useful: (a) to change the title of "the Committee on Conferences" to "the Committee on Conferences and Documentation"; (b) to extend the terms of reference of this committee to include provisions concerning the various phases of the document production process (paragraphs 100 and 101).

Recommendation 10: United Nations organizations, particularly the larger ones, should consider entrusting one of their intergovernmental bodies with the task of reviewing the implementation of decisions adopted by their legislative organs on the control and limitation of documentation (paragraph 102).

B. Recommendations which could be implemented by the executive heads of the United Nations organizations without the specific authorization of their legislative organs

Recommendation 11: United Nations organizations should consider introducing a documents quota system as appropriate (paragraphs 10-14).

Recommendation 12: Each organization should strengthen its documents control unit and give it the authority required to enforce the established rules and procedures. Where central editing units exist, they should be related closely with documents control (paragraph 15).

Recommendation 13: Editorial control services need to be strengthened in all United Nations organizations in order to improve the quality of documents and reduce their length (paragraphs 38, and 39).

Recommendation 14: Each United Nations organization in its in-service training programme should provide courses in drafting skills and editing (paragraph 40).

Recommendation 15: The United Nations rule specifying that "in order not to impede the scheduled processing of documents, once they are submitted to documents control, only corrigenda will subsequently be accepted" might be considered for application by other United Nations organizations (paragraph 37).

Recommendation 16: United Nations organizations should thoroughly analyze costs incurred for regular staff, temporary assistance and contractual services for translation and typing of documents and, without sacrificing basic quality, select, according to circumstances, the solution that is cost-effective (paragraph 57).

Recommendation 17: United Nations organizations should undertake thorough studies of the cost-effectiveness of modern documentation technology and proceed in accordance with their findings (paragraph 96).

Recommendation 18: The terms of reference of the Interagency Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications should include responsibility for identifying effective methods of control and limitation of documentation which may be adopted by individual organizations (paragraphs 105 and 106).

VOLUME OF DOCUMENTATION PRODUCED BY THE ORGANIZATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM
(in page-impressions)

Organization	1976	1977	1978	1979	Notes */
UN/NY	580,188,941	572,419,583	595,608,514	619,959,200	Internal reproduction
- UNOG	240,736,167	271,858,428	293,270,053	301,047,958	Internal reproduction a/
- UNEP	10,539,003	18,704,963	18,339,006	18,000,000	
- UNIDO	7,956,597	10,803,928	15,554,918	9,962,500	
Regional)ECA	18,570,083	19,057,902	6,732,380	25,000,255	
Commis-)ECLA	7,554,500	9,869,500	8,120,000	10,773,895	Internal reproduction
sions)ESCAP	4,862,000	9,126,700	9,170,400	9,263,500	
FAO	121,219,240	126,075,140	86,666,034	106,204,580	Internal reproduction
IAEA	9,468,000	8,161,000	9,163,000	6,816,000	Documents for scientific conferences not included.
ICAO	76,102,000	81,557,000	70,513,000	83,709,000	Internal reproduction
ILO	76,894,585	58,882,050	47,335,950	53,417,950	Internal reproduction
IMCO	15,300,000	17,500,000	18,500,000	16,000,000	
ITU	58,646,664	40,988,477	57,133,639	89,152,631	Internal reproduction b/
UNESCO	105,425,000	92,098,000	134,639,000	103,207,000	Internal reproduction c/
UPU	650,000	1,144,000	1,509,000	6,906,000	
WHO	27,992,000	19,783,000	25,344,000	22,172,000	
WMO	42,440	45,327	65,588	60,650	
TOTAL	1,362,147,220	1,358,074,998	1,397,664,482	1,481,653,117	

*/ In this table the figures for many organizations represent internal reproduction of documents only. Some organizations mentioned below, gave, as an example, the figures showing the magnitude of their outside printing, while some other organizations have no statistics on outside printing of documents.

a/ Outside printing amounted to 40,200,000 page-impressions in 1979.

b/ Outside printing amounted to 1,261,890 page-impressions in 1978 and 1,737,000 page-impressions in 1979.

c/ Outside printing amounted to 12,400,000 page-impressions in 1976 and 7,240,000 page-impressions in 1979.

PUBLICATIONS, MAIN DOCUMENTS AND WORKING PAPERS — 1980 81 ALL PROGRAMMES

Papers for meetings (W) should be listed in three groups   (i) preparatory papers   Each meeting should be
       (ii) sessional papers   separately listed and
       (iii) final reports   identified   Department/Division AG/AGP   Date 10.2.79   Date revised

Sheet No 10   No of Sheets 13

(Leave blank) Index No.	Programme or Sub-Progr[1]	Source of Funds[2]	Title of Publication Document or Meeting	Class[3] PMIW	Length (in thousands of words)	Pages of tables	Language[4]	No of copies for Division use[5]	Remarks (Planned date of submission to GIP other specifications e g illustrations size 22 × 28 cm/15 5 × 23 cm etc)	Estimated total copies Quota and Sales	Estimated total cost $	ACTION BY PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
45 716-6 +811	2.1.2.4 102		Report of the 1980 Session of FAO Panel of Experts on Pesticide Residues & the Environment & WHO Expert Committee on Pesticide Residues	M (iii)	35	20	E F S	500 200 100	January 1981 — 22 x 28	3 000 800 600	28 900	
46	2.1.2.4 102		1980 Evaluations of some pesticide residues in food	M	250	170	E	1 300	July 1981 — 22 x 28 — standard cover — 3 graphs — Ex. cover 2 colours	2 500	20 000	
47 804-1	2.1.2.4 104		1981 Expert Consultation on Harmonization of pesticide registration requirements	W (i)	33	8	E	50	July 1981 — 22 x 28 — 1 illustration		300	
48 804-2	2.1.2.4		Ad hoc Government consultation, Rome, October 1979 (Follow-up of above)	M	30		E F S	1 000 450 250	October 1981 — 22 x 28 — standard cover		13 300	
49	2.1.2.4 105		Official control scheme booklet on Pesticide Residues	M	33	8	E F S	1 000 450 250	November 1981 — 15.5 x 23 — standard cover — 1 illustration		16 400	
50	2.1.2.4 106		Specification booklets for plant protection products	M	130		E F S	300 200 100	Throughout the biennium — standard cover — 15.5 x 23		62 500	
51	2.1.2.4 107		Guidelines for training course on efficient & safe use of agricultural pesticides	W	60	20	E	500	November 1981		1 800	

[1] Use latest approved classification of sub programmes (or programmes where there is no sub programme)
[2] e g RP TF UNDP UNEP UNFPA etc
[3] Ref MS 704.3 for definitions
[4] A C E F S Use one line for each language
[5] No copies in excess of this number will be available to division

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WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION	PRODUCTION WHA/EB DOCUMENTS

From	Office No	Date	Agenda item	Document No.
	Tel No.			

Title of document	Estimated number of final pages

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Identification	date available	approx no of final pages	ACTION REQUIRED TRANSLATION INTO *						Typing	Printing
			E	F	S	R	A	C		

*E = English   F = French   S = Spanish   R = Russian   A = Arabic   C = Chinese

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A) Background information and supporting documentation attached ☐

B) Other documents quoted from or used for reference purposes in compilation of this text, but not attached

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Remarks						

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