

Office of Secretariat Services for Economic and Social Matters

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Geneva

1984

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Table of Contents

| | <u>Paragraphs</u> | <u>Page</u> |
|--|-------------------|-------------|
| I. INTRODUCTION | 1 - 3 | 1 |
| II. FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES | 4 - 29 | 2 |
| III. ORGANIZATION | 30 - 38 | 9 |
| IV. RELATIONSHIPS | 39 - 43 | 13 |
| DCS | 40 - 41 | 13 |
| DIEC and the Office of the Secretary-General | 42 - 43 | 13 |
| V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS | 44 | 14 |

Annex I: The Secretary-General's Bulletin no. 163 of 22 March 1978
Annex II: Organizational chart

I. INTRODUCTION

1. On 20 December 1977 the General Assembly adopted resolution 32/197 on the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the UN system. The present report is one of a series of JIU reports on the implementation of that resolution, undertaken at the request of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination. Previous reports have been devoted to the Office of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation, the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development, the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs and the Economic Commission for Africa.

2. Paragraphs 61(e) and 62 in the Annex to resolution 32/197 legislated for the creation of a "separate organizational entity" to provide, on an integrated basis, "technical secretariat services for the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, the Economic and Social Council, the General Assembly, ad hoc conferences and intersecretariat co-ordination machinery; this function includes organizing and co-ordinating the provision by the Secretariat units concerned of substantive support services, particularly documentation, as required by the above-mentioned bodies, ensuring that the substantive units concerned are informed of relevant developments in the work of these bodies, including resolutions and decisions adopted by them, and ensuring that these bodies are kept informed of action being taken in response to their decisions by the Secretariat units concerned". On 22 March 1978 the Secretary-General put this provision into effect by announcing, in his Bulletin no. 163 (text at Annex I), the establishment of a separate organizational entity called the "Office of Secretariat Services for Economic and Social Matters" (OSSECS). This report seeks to analyze OSSECS's performance of the functions laid down in resolution 32/197 and of others it has since acquired, its organization, its relationships with other UN system organizations, and its contribution to the economic and social work of the system.

3. The Inspectors discussed OSSECS's responsibilities and activities with many members of OSSECS itself, including its Assistant Secretary-General and his Deputy. They also had discussions with the Director-General and his staff, the Under-Secretary-General for Political and General Assembly Affairs, the Under-Secretary-General, Department of Conference Services, and many others. To all of these the Inspectors express their thanks for their valuable observations. The Inspectors also had some useful discussions with members of the bureaux of ECOSOC and the Second Committee, and with representatives of some Member States who were good enough to provide some views of OSSECS's work from a delegation standpoint.

II. FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

4. At any conference or meeting it is possible to distinguish between three categories of "inputs" by the Secretariat:-

(a) physical facilities, such as meeting rooms, interpretation, translation and documentation processing services, and conference officers;

(b) substantive documents, statements and replies to questions; and

(c) technical secretariat services, such as ensuring that substantive documentation is provided and translated on time, advising the Chair on procedural aspects of the meeting, providing a draft agenda and drafting a report of the proceedings (this list is far from inclusive).

5. In the United Nations, input (a) is provided by the Department of Conference Services (DCS); input (b) by the substantive Department or entity; input (c), insofar as economic and social matters are concerned, is provided by OSSECS. Until the adoption of resolution 32/197, technical secretariat services in respect of economic and social matters to the intergovernmental bodies were provided by the ECOSOC Secretariat, which was part of the old Department of Economic and Social Affairs; and such services to the ACC machinery were provided by the Office for Inter-Agency Affairs, which was directly under the Secretary-General. These have been brought together in OSSECS.

6. The technical secretariat services to be provided by OSSECS were listed in March 1978, in Bulletin no. 163, under the following headings (full text at Annex I):

(a) technical secretariat services for CPC, ECOSOC, the General Assembly and ad hoc economic and social conferences, and for the "inter-secretariat co-ordination machinery" (ACC);

(b) organizing and co-ordinating the provision by the Secretariat of substantive support services, particularly documentation;

(c) ensuring that the intergovernmental bodies and the substantive secretariat units are all kept informed of relevant decisions and executive actions flowing from these decisions;

(d) preparing, in consultation with the substantive units, the ECOSOC programme of work;

(e) preparing the economic and social conference calendar, with the DCS;

(f) helping the Political and General Assembly Affairs secretariat in the formulation of the provisional agenda of the General Assembly in respect of economic and social matters and in all relevant organizational aspects including recommendations for the allocation of items.

7. Since 1978, some of the functions in this list have grown relatively to the others, and one significant additional one has emerged, namely the servicing of informal consultations outside the formal framework of ECOSOC, the General Assembly and other intergovernmental meetings, including the servicing of meetings of the Group of 77 and its working groups. During the period 1978-83, the number of weeks of technical services provided by OSSECS to formal meetings of all kinds rose from 55 to 64. OSSECS calculates that for each session of an inter-governmental body lasting 10 working days, 7 working days of pre-session preparation are required, and 5 working days of post-session follow-up.

8. It will be useful to examine these functions, and their performance, one by one.

9. Function (a) as listed in SGB 163: (i): the provision of technical secretariat services for CPC, ECOSOC and the General Assembly. In general terms, this means ensuring that the various secretariat and delegation inputs are organized into effective and orderly proceedings and - to the extent possible - into practical decisions, compatible with those of other bodies. The Director and Deputy to the Assistant Secretary-General of OSSECS, is the Secretary of ECOSOC and of the Second Committee of the General Assembly. He is therefore in a position to make an important and distinctive contribution to these meetings. OSSECS also provides the Secretary of the Third Committee of the General Assembly, responsibility for whose proceedings it has recently taken over and, in the person of the Assistant Director, the Secretary of CPC. This function includes working in close co-operation with DCS, substantive Departments and Offices and other UN entities, to ensure the proper scheduling of meetings and the provision of all the necessary physical inputs, notifying all concerned of dates, times and places of meetings, assisting the Chair in planning, organizing and controlling the proceedings, providing agendas and informal conference papers and drafting reports of proceedings for the press and for the record, and being generally "available" to help participants with any information or advice that may contribute to the success of the meetings.

10. The Inspectors believe that delegates and secretariat entities in general are fully satisfied with OSSECS's work under this heading.

11. Function (a) (ii): the provision of technical secretariat services to ad hoc conferences (now generally known as special conferences) in the economic and social fields. This has proved to be a very considerable part of OSSECS's work. The number of special economic and social conferences has never stopped growing, and OSSECS is made responsible, in its own field, for at least one new conference (and generally more) every year. These include conferences on subjects for which CSPHA is responsible, such as ageing. OSSECS's involvement starts at the initial planning stage of a conference and runs on through the meetings of the conference preparatory committee and the conference itself until the "clearing-up" stage after it has ended. It is therefore almost always working on different stages of two or more special conferences simultaneously. As a rule, OSSECS provides the secretary of the conference as well as the secretary of the preparatory committee, together with supporting staff, and carries out the same functions as it performs for ECOSOC and the General Assembly, which includes a considerable amount of forward planning. These matters are examined at length in the JIU's report of February 1982 on Secretariat Organization and Procedures for the Preparation of UN Special Conferences (JIU/REP/82/2). In that report, the Inspectors proposed various measures that might be taken to ensure the efficient functioning of the Secretariat machinery for special conferences. OSSECS also arranges and services the annual pledging conference provided for in paragraph 31 of the annex to resolution 32/197, as well as the biennial pledging conferences for the World Food Programme and other ad hoc pledging conferences in the field of economic and social development.

12. Function (a) (iii): the provision of technical services to the inter-secretariat co-ordination machinery. This is one of the functions that used to be performed by the Office for Inter-Agency Affairs, and its absorption by the new OSSECS in 1978 was contemporaneous with the re-modelling of the ACC machinery that took place in response to resolution 32/197. OSSECS provides technical services to the Organizational Committee, of which the Assistant Secretary-General of OSSECS occupies the Chair, and for both elements of the Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions, namely CCSQ(PROG) and CCSQ(OPS). This involves the monitoring of some 45 to 50 inter-agency consultative meetings of an average dura-

tion of two days every year. OSSECS also processes documents of CCSQ and the Organizational Committee as well as those of ACC itself; it also processes the reports of CCAQ meetings but in this case does not provide the input documents. It does however provide a central point of reference in the UN for matters relating to the technical servicing of inter-agency affairs.

13. If only because of the size of the UN relating to the other members of ACC, and its central political position, the UN is almost inevitably responsible for the technical servicing of the ACC economic and social mechanism. It is of the greatest importance that the UN should fulfil its function impartially as between members of ACC, and that all concerned should be confident that it is doing so. Not being part of the substantive economic and social machinery of the UN, OSSECS is able to work impartially and it takes great care to do nothing which would jeopardize its reputation with the specialized agencies for impartiality. Substantive inputs on behalf of the UN are provided by the relevant substantive UN organ: the Department of Administration and Management on administrative, financial and personnel matters, the Director-General on general economic and social policy and PPCO on joint planning and co-ordination.

14. Function (b): organizing and co-ordinating the provision by the secretariat of substantive support services, particularly documentation. This function consists of much more than seeing that substantive Departments produce documents for the intergovernmental and inter-secretariat bodies. OSSECS is responsible for planning the production of the documents and for seeing that they are produced in time to be translated, reproduced and circulated not later than the relevant deadlines. Documents must also be properly drafted and properly laid out, and they must not exceed the 24-page limit laid down in 1982; this editing responsibility also falls to OSSECS. OSSECS services about 30 sessions of intergovernmental and inter-secretariat meetings, including special conferences, in a year, and for them it organizes and edits over 40,000 pages of documents and publications. These functions in relation to economic and social documentation are discussed in more detail in paragraphs 26-29 and 35-37 below, but it may be said here that they are discharged with efficiency.

15. Organizing and co-ordinating the provision by the Secretariat of substantive services other than documentation includes ensuring that substantive officers attend intergovernmental meetings when items relevant to their work are being taken up, to introduce substantive papers, follow the debates and to provide answers to any substantive questions that may be raised from the floor. This poses no particular problems, but there is also the corollary negative function of discouraging substantive departments from sending representatives to meetings unnecessarily, especially meetings held away from Headquarters. This is not always easy to effect, but it is important that the United Nations should give no justification to criticism that its officials indulge in superfluous travel.

16. Function (c): ensuring that intergovernmental and inter-secretariat bodies and Secretariat units are informed of decisions and executive actions. This is a simple but essential function of OSSECS, deriving from its provision of technical secretariat services to the intergovernmental bodies and to the ACC machinery. No difficulty is found in keeping track of intergovernmental and ACC decisions; in relation to executive action flowing from them, OSSECS has the necessary close relations with the secretariats of the system to enable it to follow developments.

17. Function (d): preparing, in consultation with the substantive units concerned, the basic programme of work of the ECOSOC. This is a complicated exercise which requires full understanding of the various substantive matters under consideration and of the way in which they can be combined with other matters to form single agenda items for consideration at a given session of the Council.

Throughout this exercise, the resolutions and decisions of the ECOSOC regarding the periodicity of recurrent items and other measures of rationalization of work have to be borne in mind. The Secretariat is further required to propose to the Council, at its annual organizational session at which it considers the basic programme for the biennium, measures to deal with redundant or repetitious items or documentation.

18. Function (e): preparing, in consultation with the DCS, the calendar of conferences and meetings in the economic and social fields. This requires, in addition to acquaintance with the subject matter of the conferences and meetings to be arranged, awareness of the annual or biennial timetable of economic and social activities, since meetings have to be scheduled in such a manner as to permit timely reporting from each subordinate body to its parent body which is to receive its report. It is also essential not to overload the conference facilities at any given time, by fitting the schedule of economic and social meetings into the overall calendar of meetings prepared by DCS for consideration by the Committee on Conferences. It is also necessary to avoid the overlap of sessions of bodies working in a similar field since delegations find it difficult to attend simultaneous meetings.

19. Function (f): assisting the Office of the USG for Political and General Assembly Affairs in the formulation of the provisional agenda of the General Assembly in respect of economic and social matters and in all relevant organizational aspects. OSSEC's input comprises the organization of items in the Second and Third Committees in a rational and co-ordinated manner, as well as the provision of comprehensive and up-to-date annotations for each item.

20. It is necessary now to consider the very substantial function which has emerged since Bulletin 163 came out: the provision of technical services to meetings that take place outside the formal programme that appears at the beginning of the Journal, namely informal consultations outside the formal inter-governmental framework, including meetings of the Group of 77 and its working groups. These are mostly related to the work of the ECOSOC and above all of the Second Committee of the General Assembly, but there is also a number of informal meetings held intersessionally. These meetings now far out-number the formal ones. See Tables 1 and 2 below:-

Table 1: OSSECS - Number of formal and informal meetings and hours involved, 1979 and 1980

| | <u>Official Meetings</u> | | | <u>Informal Meetings</u> | | | <u>Total Number of Meetings and Hours</u> | | |
|------|--------------------------|--------------|----------|--------------------------|--------------|----------|---|--------------|----------|
| | <u>Number</u> | <u>Hours</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>Number</u> | <u>Hours</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>Number</u> | <u>Hours</u> | <u>%</u> |
| 1979 | 351 | 1,178 | | 552 | 1,035.45 | | 1,073 | 2,213 | |
| 1980 | 558 | 1,287.45 | + 8% | 689 | 1,706.55 | + 54% | 1,247 | 2,994.50 | + 35% |

Table 2: Number of formal and informal meetings and hours devoted to the Second Committee of the General Assembly serviced by OSSECS in 1982 and 1983

| | <u>1982</u> | <u>1983</u> | | <u>1982</u> | <u>1983</u> |
|--------------------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| No. of formal meetings | 51 | 56 | No. of hours of formal meetings | 109 | 132 |
| No. of informal meetings | 76 | 74 | No. of hours of informal meetings | 256 | 312 |

21. This function partly arose because of a change that took place in the working methods of the Second Committee. Until the early 1970s, it was normal for draft resolutions to be negotiated, and voted on, on the floor of the Committee in formal session. From about that time, the Committee has increasingly taken (and in fact has institutionalized) the course of negotiating resolutions and decisions in private, informal inter-group discussions, presided over by one of its Vice-Chairmen, at which business can be despatched with greater ease and celerity than in formal meetings. This technique has the additional advantage of making it possible greatly to reduce the number of formal votes in Committee, and to adopt most texts by consensus. It has however been found essential to have the technical assistance of OSSECS at these meetings. No records are kept, but someone must keep track of all drafts that are put forward, and of all the amendments to them; must arrange for committee rooms and interpretation to be made available through DCS; must help the Chairman to run the meeting; must provide lists of proposals, texts and "states of play", for the participants, in the requisite number of copies, throughout the session. OSSECS provides in addition, a weekly list of formal and informal meetings of the Committee throughout the course of the General Assembly.

22. OSSECS has also been made responsible for the technical servicing of group and sub-group meetings of the Group of 77 on the economic side. The Group is now so numerous that servicing its meetings far exceeds the capacities of any delegation, and its meetings require almost as much advance scheduling and preparation as those of a formal Committee. OSSECS is also able to help in the preparation of documents and in the conduct of the meetings, and this is useful because discussions, formal or informal, can hardly begin before the Group of 77 has decided its position and - in most cases - produced its initial draft resolution or decision.

23. Since these meetings are private, OSSECS is in a position of some delicacy. Not only must it respect - and be seen to respect - the confidentiality of the proceedings and documentation it must also preserve the confidence of the delegations whom it serves by not trying to use its position in order to push the discussions in one direction rather than another. The Inspectors are glad to note that no criticism of OSSECS in these respects has reached them. Some elements in the Secretariat, indeed, have criticised OSSECS for not telling substantive departments enough of what goes on in the private meetings, and have suggested that the substantive departments should attend the informal meetings by right, in order to keep in touch with delegations' thinking and to adjust their research and analysis to the requirements of intergovernmental bodies. It was even suggested that substantive departments should be responsible for the technical servicing of informal (and formal) meetings. There may be the elements of a genuine problem here, for substantive departments are indeed deprived of contact with movements of opinion to the extent that informal meetings from which they are excluded, replace formal ones which they have the right to attend. But Table 1 shows that the total of formal meetings has not shrunk, despite the growth of informal ones, so the Inspectors are inclined to doubt the extent of any real reduction of departments' knowledge of what is going on. In principle, the Inspectors consider that it is for OSSECS to judge how much information it can give to other branches of the Secretariat. It is of course for delegations, as the principal participants in a meeting, not for its secretariat, to say who should have the right to attend. It is also the right of the principal participants to say who should be responsible for servicing their meetings. And since resolution 32/197 has laid down that the formal meetings should be serviced by a "separate organizational entity", it seems wisest to stick to this arrangement in respect of informal meetings also. The Inspectors note that Member States feel full confidence in OSSECS's impartiality (before restructuring when the ECOSOC Secretariat was part of DFSA it was not always considered as fully impartial) and that they prefer their meetings to be run by OSSECS rather than by some other branch.

24. At this point the Inspectors should perhaps record one further criticism that was made to them by members of substantive departments. It was suggested that with OSSECS responsible for the technical servicing of ECOSOC - though in principle this criticism can hardly apply to ECOSOC alone - too much attention is paid, in the intergovernmental body as well as on the Secretariat side, to administrative matters such as limiting the number of documents and reducing the number and length of sessions, and too little to the substantive work; if substantive departments were responsible for the technical servicing, it was said, ECOSOC would make more progress on its substantive work. No such criticism has reached the Inspectors from other quarters, and they do not consider it sufficiently well-founded to justify them in recommending a revision of the relevant paragraph of resolution 32/197. Nor do they consider that it would be advisable to diffuse or duplicate OSSECS's responsibilities amongst the various substantive departments and entities. They consider that the technical expertise and impartiality of OSSECS are valuable assets.

25. Indeed, it can even be argued that OSSECS's responsibilities could well be extended to other Committees of the General Assembly and to other intergovernmental meetings outside the economic and social fields. Technical expertise and impartiality can be used to advantage in all spheres of activity, and a proposal that OSSECS should provide the technical services for a recent international political conference was in fact made within the Secretariat. To its regret, OSSECS felt obliged to turn it down because of lack of resources. The Inspectors recommend that the Secretary-General might consider whether in due course, after OSSECS has fully adjusted to its newly-acquired responsibilities for the Third Committee, OSSECS might also be made responsible for the provision of technical services to other General Assembly Committees and to some special conferences outside the economic and social sectors. Resources commensurate with any new tasks would of course have to be transferred and the Office's title reconsidered.

Departmental responsibility for editorial functions

26. Editing is an integral part of conference servicing and is thus in the first place a matter for DCS. But in certain formally agreed instances, namely OSSECS and the Division of General Assembly Affairs, editing is carried out beyond the confines of DCS. The Division of General Assembly Affairs edits documents with an "A" symbol, OSSECS edits documents in the field of economic and social affairs and DCS edits other documents including those of the Security Council. All editing is done in accordance with the same editorial directives, some of which have sensitive political implications, and the Inspectors were pleased to hear that these editorial directives have recently been consolidated by DCS into a United Nations Editorial Manual and made available to all personnel in the Secretariat and in all parts of the UN system, who are responsible for drafting or editing documents.

27. There is a long history of discussions about the optimum degree to which responsibility for editing should be combined in one department or subdivided amongst several. So far as OSSECS is concerned, the Inspectors believe that the decision, deriving from resolution 32/197, to make it responsible for the editing of documents in the social and economic fields has been justified by results (before resolution 32/197, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs was responsible). OSSECS has established a strong mechanism for dealing with the economic and social documentation, it applies the rules and standards vigorously, and its relationship with DCS in the documentation area is close and satisfactory.

28. It has also been suggested that some of the substantive economic and social entities, in particular DIESA, should have their own editorial staff, which would allow them to recruit editors specialized in the economic and social fields. The argument is that the substantive entities need specialized editors because

some of their economists and specialized writers are more numerate than literate and their drafting needs to be improved through editing. The Inspectors recognize that there is some merit in this argument, but they believe that the concentration of editing control of documents dealing with economic and social matters within OSSECS has allowed it to give priority to the editing of the most important and urgent documents and to process in-session documents rapidly. To give the substantive entities editorial responsibilities would, in the Inspectors' view, not be in accordance with the provisions of resolution 32/197 (cf. paragraph 37 below). In any case, specialized editors are not necessarily the best people to edit specialized material and make it intelligible to the non-specialized delegate or reader. On the whole, the Inspectors conclude that editorial control in the economic and social fields is best retained with OSSECS.

29. The wider question of the inter-departmental distribution of editorial responsibility stretches beyond the limits of this report. Any proposal to change it would first have to be examined by AMS, which should consult the entities concerned and advise the Secretary-General accordingly.

III. ORGANIZATION

30. At the time of its establishment OSSECS was staffed by redeployed personnel, some from the old ECOSOC secretariat (17 professionals) and some from the Office of Inter-Agency Affairs and Co-ordination (3 professionals). There were 15 general service staff as well. There are no extra-budgetary posts in OSSECS. The table below shows the movements in the staffing table since 1978.

Table 3: OSSECS - Established Post Requirements

| | 1978-79 | 1980-81 | 1982-83 | 1984-85 |
|---------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Professional Category and above | | | | |
| ASG | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| D2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| D1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| P5 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 |
| P4 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| P3 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 6 |
| P2/P1 | - | - | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 20 | 20 | 20 | 21 |
| General Service Category | | | | |
| Principal level | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| Other levels | 9 | 10 | 10 | 12 |
| Total | 15 | 16 | 16 | 18 |
| Grand Total | 35 | 36 | 36 | 39 |

Source: Proposed Programme Budgets for the Biennium 1978-79, 1980-81, 1982-83 and 1984-85. Section 8.

31. OSSECS is - appropriately - a much smaller organism than the two main Departments in the economic and social field, DIESA and DTCD. DIESA has an established staff of 514, plus 82 extra-budgetary personnel, and a budget of US\$ 57 million direct costs for 1984/85; DTCD has an established staff of 199, plus an undetermined but larger number of extra-budgetary personnel, and a budget of US\$ 17.6 million. OSSECS has an established staff of 39 and no extra-budgetary personnel, and a budget of US\$ 3.8 million.

32. Relative to the work done in 1978, OSSECS professional staff has not increased at all. The one additional P.5 proposed for the 1984-85 biennium represents a post transferred from the Human Rights staff for the servicing of the Third Committee of the General Assembly. The two additional general service posts represent in one case a similar transfer of general service temporary assistance from the human rights secretariat, converted into a permanent post,

and in the other case the conversion into a permanent post of temporary assistance provisions contained in previous OSSECS budgets. So it can be stated that in respect of its original programme there has been no increase in OSSECS professional staff and only one (in 1980-81) in the general staff. This reflects favourably on OSSECS, since its workload and responsibilities have increased significantly, particularly with the increased number of informal meetings.

The Office is organized as follows (see chart at Annex II):

- (a) Office of Assistant Secretary-General: 1 ASG
1 D2 Director and Deputy
2 General Service

- (b) Meetings Servicing Branch:
 - (i) Intergovernmental and other meetings 2 P5
4 P4
1 P3
9 General Service

 - (ii) Inter-Agency Affairs: 1 P5
1 P4
2 General Service

- (c) Programme, Calendar & Documents Planning Unit and Editorial Control Section: 1 D1 (Assistant Director)
1 General Staff
 - (i) Programme, Calendar & Documents Planning: 1 P5
4 General Service

 - (ii) Editorial Control Section: 1 P5
1 P4
5 P3
1 P2/P1
1 General Service

32. The Meetings Servicing Branch works on the servicing of the various meetings. One of the three P5s in practice works almost full-time on the meetings of the Group of 77 and AMS staff members are assigned to this duty as well. The duties of this Branch are set forth in detail in paragraphs 9 to 15 and 21 to 23 above. It may be mentioned that one of the Branch's useful functions is the maintaining of regular distribution of conference room papers showing the "state of play" on all the different draft resolutions under discussion on given items in ECOSOC and Committee 2. This function, with much other routine paper work, has necessitated the acquisition of a word-processing system with two work stations and one output printer.

34. The Programme, Calendar and Documents Planning Unit works on the programming and planning of economic and social meetings and conferences and on the organization of the provision of documents for those meetings and conferences. This requires close liaison with the Department of Conference Services, the Secretariat of the Committee on Conferences and with the substantive offices concerned and DIEC. One of the stiffest problems for the Unit is enforcing the 24-page limit on secretariat documents submitted to the intergovernmental bodies. This requires both pertinacity and the support of higher authority. Both have fortunately been forthcoming and the Unit can claim to good progress in this regard, attested by the Documents Control Section in DCS.

35. The Editorial Section is responsible for editing, in accordance with the general editing directives of DCS, all documentation for the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies, the Second Committee of the General Assembly, the subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly and the ad hoc committees of its special sessions concerned with economic and social matters, special conferences concerned with economic and social matters, and documents submitted to the Assembly through the Economic and Social Council. The Section is also responsible for editing all documentation of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) and its subsidiary machinery, as well as for all sales publications emanating from the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development and the Centre on Transnational Corporations, as approved by the Publications Board. About 30 meetings and conferences a year are covered, and about 45,000 pages of documents and sales publications. The number of pages submitted for review has grown considerably in the last few years. The quality of drafting is a perennial problem, and the Section also has to tackle the usual editorial tasks of checking footnotes and references, ensuring internal consistency and so forth. OSSECS states that in 1982 its editors managed to reduce by about 1,000 the number of pages forecast for submission to ECOSOC at its second regular session.

36. OSSECS procedures do not as a rule pose any major problems, but it appears that sometimes adjacent entities find that important policy or substantive changes have been made in their original texts on the basis of comments made by other entities and only occasionally communicated to them, on the grounds that OSSECS has the responsibility for doing the final editing. The inspectors recommend that the right of OSSECS to be the final editor should be accompanied by an obligation to communicate a proposed serious or policy modification of texts to the substantive entities concerned before making final changes.

37. OSSECS's editorial duties extend to documents produced by CSDHA for inter-governmental meetings in Vienna, when such documents are to be translated and printed in New York (CSDHA documents for production in Vienna are edited by UNIDO). Communications between Vienna and New York continue to be slow and problematical, and a good deal of delay is caused by this arrangement. The question arises whether CSDHA should have its own editorial staff, or whether OSSECS should have an outpost in Vienna. To give CSDHA, or any substantive entity, its own editorial staff would presumably not be in accord with the provisions of resolution 32/197, and the Inspectors could not recommend it. To create an outpost of OSSECS in Vienna would be too "heavy" a solution for a relatively small problem, and the Inspectors believe that OSSECS and CSDHA should rely on a continued improvement in the Vienna facsimile service and in other technologies to alleviate it. The Inspectors also note that the 1984-85 programme budget for Conference Services in Vienna administered by UNIDO, Section 290, envisages 379 working days of temporary assistance for editing one and a half million words in the biennium; it might be possible to draw on this resource in respect of at least some of CSDHA's documents produced in Vienna.

38. The Inspectors came to the conclusion that in general terms the relatively simple organization of OSSECS is adequate and allows OSSECS to perform its functions smoothly. However, they believe that the following organizational aspects deserve some clarification:

(a) Organizational change

The present work load of OSSECS branches (see annex 1) and their wide responsibilities would warrant, in the opinion of the Inspectors, the creation of three separate branches headed each by a full-time director at the level of the main

would cover the calendar and documents planning and editorial control. One would cover intergovernmental and other meetings, and the servicing of special conferences. The third would cover inter-agency affairs. The last two branches would be part of an overall meetings servicing organism.

(b) Terms of Reference

OSSECS has been functioning since its inception without formal Terms of Reference apart from the listing of functions contained in SGB 163. The Inspectors recommend that the Secretary-General should issue Terms of Reference for OSSECS without delay and that these should include the servicing of informal group and inter-group meetings, as well as the special conferences on economic, social and related matters and the annual pledging conference (the Inspectors note that the functions of the secretary of special conferences have been laid down in the Secretary-General's Bulletin no. ST/SGB/160 of 13 October 1977). The exclusion of the servicing of meetings organized by the Centre for Human Rights and the Division of Narcotic Drugs should be specified. If the Terms of Reference could provide clear definitions of the special conferences that should be serviced by OSSECS and those which are excluded from its field of competence, this would help to avoid confusion about the conferences OSSECS is expected to service. The issuance of such Terms of Reference does not represent a simple formality. It would rather help in delineating more closely the functions of OSSECS and avoid conflicts and duplication.

IV. RELATIONSHIPS

39. OSSECS's function of providing technical services involves it in working relationships with several Secretariat entities, principally DCS, DIEC, the Office of the Secretary-General, the Office of the USG for Political and General Assembly Affairs and substantive departments and offices and other UN entities. The present chapter deals with some aspects of these relationships, with the exception of relationships with substantive entities which have been covered in Chapters II and III.

DCS

40. The different but related functions of DCS and OSSECS in relation to conferences and meetings (see paragraphs 4 and 5 above) require close collaboration between the two. OSSECS works closely with DCS with regard to the scheduling of meetings, requirements for meeting rooms, interpretation, records, documentation, etc., and the relationship between OSSECS and DCS is very close and generally satisfactory. OSSECS action to keep down the amount of documentation and enforce the 24-page rule is helpful to DCS. Sometimes DCS, at OSSECS's request, represents both entities on planning missions for special conferences.

41. The substantial increase in informal meetings, especially those related to ECOSOC and the Second Committee, and other intergovernmental bodies mentioned in paragraph 20 above has placed a burden on DCS as well as on OSSECS because conference rooms have to be found for these meetings and interpretation and other services arranged. Hitherto DCS, like OSSECS, has arranged for these meetings on an "as available" basis, fitting them into the interstices of the formal programme and providing interpreters and other officers when they were not busy on formal meetings; there is no specific mention of the provision of technical or other services to these informal meetings in Section 29 of the programme budget, devoted to DCS, or in Section 8 on OSSECS, though the provisions for "general temporary assistance" doubtless cover many things. The question arises whether the need to service these informal meetings related to ECOSOC and the Second Committee should be formally recognized, in the sense that DCS's and OSSECS's obligations should be accepted as legitimate grounds for resource requests in the programme budget, and that the two entities should be authorized to plan these informal meetings with the necessary financial and human resources in their programmes - not, of course, to the detriment of the formal meetings programme, which should have the first priority. The Inspectors believe that the scale of this need, and the importance of the informal meetings to the formal programme, have become so great as to justify this step.

DIEC and the Office of the Secretary-General

42. Before restructuring, the former Office of Inter-Agency Affairs and Co-ordination reported to the Secretary-General on inter-agency aspects of economic and social matters, especially in relation to ACC. After the establishment of the Director-General and his Office, OSSECS started to report to the Director-General on ACC matters in the economic and social fields, though the direct link with the Secretary-General was retained. The Inspectors consider that this procedure was correct. When there is any doubt whether any individual question deserves to be brought to the Secretary-General's attention direct, informal consultations between OSSECS, the DIEC and the Secretary-General's Office should decide the matter.

43. The Inspectors consider that OSSECS's role in inter-agency matters should be maintained and even strengthened. It should not be transferred to the Director-General's Office, because that Office is becoming increasingly involved in matters of substance affecting United Nations interests. Neither should OSSECS's role in inter-agency affairs be moved back to the Secretary-General's Office. The Secretary-General should not be further burdened with responsibilities.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

44. OSSECS, a relatively small but important organization, is performing a job of importance within the framework set up by resolution 32/197. The Inspectors do not believe that redistributing its functions to other parts of the Secretariat would contribute to the achievement of the fundamental purpose of that resolution, namely, inter alia, making the system more fully capable of dealing with problems of international economic co-operation and development in a comprehensive and effective manner. The undoubted impartiality of OSSECS as between UN departments and organizations, and between the UN and the specialized agencies, is an important asset in the present situation and should not be jeopardized. Its effective provision of technical services to ECOSOC and the Second Committee suggests that it might in future develop into an organization serving more than the economic and social sectors of the UN.

RECOMMENDATION 1

The Secretary-General should consider whether in due course OSSECS might be made responsible for the provision of technical services to other General Assembly Committees and to some special conferences outside the economic and social sectors.

RECOMMENDATION 2

OSSECS should communicate to substantive entities all proposed serious or policy modifications of their draft papers, before making final changes.

RECOMMENDATION 3

AMS could consider the various arguments for the concentration or diffusion of editorial responsibilities and should advise the Secretary-General after consulting the entities concerned.

RECOMMENDATION 4

The Secretary-General should issue OSSECS's Terms of Reference without delay, taking account of the functions which it has acquired since Bulletin 163 was issued.

RECOMMENDATION 5

OSSECS's and DCS's responsibility for servicing informal meetings, especially those related to ECOSOC and the Second Committee, should be accepted as legitimate grounds for requests for resources in the programme budget, and both should be authorized to plan these meetings, with the necessary financial and human resources, subject to the priority requirements of the formal meetings programme.

ST/SGE/163
23 March 1973

SECRETARY-GENERAL'S BULLETIN

To: Members of the Staff

Subject: ESTABLISHMENT OF THE OFFICE OF SECRETARIAT
SERVICES FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL MATTERS

1. With effect from the day of issuance, there is established in accordance with General Assembly resolution 32/197 an Office of Secretariat Services for Economic and Social Matters.

2. The functions of the Office of Secretariat Services for Economic and Social Matters are as follows:

(a) To provide, on an integrated basis, technical secretariat services for the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, for the Economic and Social Council, for the General Assembly and ad hoc conferences in the economic and social fields as well as for the inter-secretariat co-ordination machinery;

(b) To organize and co-ordinate the provision by the Secretariat units concerned of substantive support services, particularly documentation, as required by the above-mentioned bodies in the economic and social fields;

(c) To ensure that the substantive units concerned are informed of relevant developments in the work of these bodies in the economic and social fields, including resolutions and decisions adopted by them; and to ensure that these bodies are kept informed of action being taken, in response to their decisions, by the Secretariat units concerned;

(d) To prepare, in consultation with the substantive units concerned, the basic programme of work of the Economic and Social Council;

(e) To prepare, in consultation with the Department of Conference Services, the calendar of conferences and meetings in the economic and social fields;

(f) To assist the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Political and General Assembly Affairs in the formulation of the provisional agenda of the General Assembly in respect of economic and social matters and in all relevant organizational aspects, including recommendations for the allocation of items, etc.

3. The Economic and Social Council Secretariat, except for the Non-governmental-Organization Section, is transferred from the Department of ESA to the Office of Secretariat Services for Economic and Social Matters. Further arrangements relating to the organization of the Office of Secretariat Services for Economic and Social Matters will be announced in due course.

OFFICE OF SECRETARIAT SERVICES FOR ECONOMIC & SOCIAL MATTERS



