

REPRESENTATION OF ORGANIZATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM AT CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS

Part A. The United Nations

Prepared by

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The study on representation of organizations of the United Nations system at conferences and meetings was included in the work programme of the Joint Inspection Unit for 1987. Although the Inspector had initially planned to complete it for the forty-second session of the General Assembly, the submission of the report was postponed to the forty-third session.
2. This postponement was due to practical reasons. The Inspector intended to undertake two reports on representation: one concerning the United Nations (as Part A) ^{1/}; the other, the specialized agencies (as Part B). The latter was planned to be completed in 1988. However, as a result of consultations and investigation, it became clear that it would be inconvenient to present two reports at different times. The Inspector, therefore, decided to wait for the completion of the second report and, then, present the two at the same time in 1988.
3. The objectives of this study are to review the existing procedures and mechanisms related to the representation of the United Nations at international conferences and meetings, to examine the usefulness and effectiveness of the participation by the staff members of the Secretariat and to recommend ways and means to increase its efficiency and reduce the costs involved, particularly in the light of the current financial constraints that the Organization is facing and of the efforts taken by the Secretary-General to deal with them. However, the intention of the Inspector is not to discourage participation as such in conferences and meetings, but to decrease unnecessary participation without prejudice to the quality of representation and the image of the Organization.
4. It should be noted that no studies have been undertaken on this subject, although internal auditors have made some observations recently on overall official travel which includes partially the travels executed for the purposes of attendance at conferences and meetings.
5. All arrangements made for representation at conferences and meetings should be subject to a systematic process of co-ordination within the United Nations which generated appropriate instructions. Thus, the Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/207 dated 5 December 1984 was issued on the subject of "Official United Nations travel to and representation at conferences and meetings" (ST/SGB/207 hereinafter). This was revised on 16 December 1987 (ST/SGB/207/Rev.1 hereinafter). While ST/SGB/207/Rev.1 is presently the most up-to-date instrument, this report uses ST/SGB/207 as a basis, given that it covers the years 1985-1986 when the latter was in force. However, the two bulletins are referred to in this report depending on the context.
6. ST/SGB/207 introduced a new procedure on the official travel of United Nations representatives to conferences and meetings, by centralizing the representational activity under the direction and control of the

^{1/} In this study, the term "the United Nations" covers all entities of the United Nations Secretariat, i.e. all departments, offices, services and organs within the United Nations. It is in this sense that this report uses "United Nations departments and offices" or simply "departments" as a general term to represent all entities of the Secretariat.

Representation Unit of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. Bearing this in mind, this study aims at examining and assessing the overall practice of representation of the United Nations by departments and offices with due regard to the requirements enumerated in ST/SGB/207.

7. The conferences and meetings which are referred to under ST/SGB/207/Rev.1 are "of an intergovernmental, inter-agency or non-governmental nature and may include meetings of the United Nations bodies... and conferences and meetings held by specialized agencies". These procedures apply to travel to conferences and meetings "either to represent the United Nations or to provide Secretariat support services", although the latter category is out of the scope of this study.

8. With regard to the methodology, the Inspector had intended to present a comparative analysis on the basis of precise statistics concerning various aspects of representation, such as: the number of invitations and meetings attended, the costs of representation and the workload entailed. He had expected to quantify the main factors comprising this activity and then to draw appropriate conclusions on the practice of the United Nations departments and offices in respect of representation by comparing the figures for the years 1980, 1985 and 1986. However, this did not turn out possible because of the lack or serious scarcity of precise information for 1985 and 1986 and the total absence of figures for 1980. Consequently, he had to deal with only averages and round figures for the years 1985 and 1986.

9. In preparing Part A of this study, the Inspector designed a questionnaire which was distributed to all United Nations entities. Most of the departments replied to the questionnaire and provided interesting information. On the basis of the analysis of the replies, the Inspector held useful discussions with the officials concerned, in particular with those of the Representation Unit of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. All of these contacts were of great importance and value. The Inspector wishes to thank all of those whom he met for their close co-operation and their frankness which was of great assistance to him in conducting this study.

II. LEGAL BASIS FOR REPRESENTATION AT CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS

A. Organizations of the United Nations system

10. The legal basis for the representation of organizations of the United Nations system is provided for in the Charter of the United Nations. Article 57 of the Charter provides for relationship between the United Nations and various specialized agencies. With a view to constituting a means of consultation and co-ordination, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) may enter into agreements with any of the specialized agencies (Art. 63). Thus, all the organizations of the United Nations system have mutually concluded agreements.

11. Representation is established by virtue of Article 70 of the Charter on the basis of the reciprocity between the United Nations and the specialized agencies. This Article provides for : "arrangements for representatives of the specialized agencies to participate in its deliberations and in those of the commissions established by it, and for its representatives to participate in the deliberations of the specialized agencies." Therefore, the agreements concluded between the United Nations and the specialized agencies in terms of Article 63 of the Charter contain provisions for, inter alia, "reciprocal representation".

12. Article 70 of the Charter refers to the agreements of the specialized agencies with the ECOSOC; however, in fact, the scope of these provisions has been extended to the United Nations as a whole. Therefore, these liaison agreements do not only refer to the representatives of the ECOSOC, but also to those of the United Nations. Almost all the agreements provide for the representation of the specialized agencies at the meetings, such as the ECOSOC, its committees and commissions, as well as those of the General Assembly and its commissions and those of the Trusteeship Council ^{2/}. With regard to subsidiary organs of the United Nations, the provisions concerned do not indicate any mention of their representatives. However, in practice this lacuna has been filled to the effect that the United Nations representation includes its subsidiary organs. In fact, these organs are principally interested in participating in the meetings of technical subjects which are directly related to their activities.

13. Although the provisions on "reciprocal representation" differ in wording from one agreement to another, they are generally used in the same terms as prescribed in Article 70 of the Charter. Representation of this type can be characterized by the participation in meetings "without vote". Representatives enjoy a "consultative status". They participate in the deliberations of the meetings, when the organization has "an interest" in the

^{2/} The only exception is the agreement with the Universal Postal Union (UPU) which does not provide for the participation in the meetings of the Trusteeship Council.

agenda items, or on "questions within the scope of its activities". Representation is not conceived as a right, since it can be exercised only on invitation 3/.

14. The representation of organizations of the United Nations system is not limited to "reciprocal representation"; rather, it goes beyond the terms defined in Article 70 of the Charter. With regard to non-governmental organizations (NGOs), Article 70 provides for suitable arrangements for consultation. Thus, the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1296 (XIV) spells out these "suitable arrangements" for consultation with NGOs. In practice, the United Nations and the specialized agencies receive invitations from all kinds of organizations, such as regional institutions, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.

15. The proliferation of the activities of the United Nations system has by far extended the scope of representation. Under these circumstances, representation may be given less priorities than at the inception of the United Nations. Moreover, it has been even a one-way exercise, since the United Nations does not often make requests for access to the meetings of the specialized agencies or other organizations.

B. The United Nations

16. With regard to the Secretariat of the United Nations, ST/SGB/207 sets the procedures for controlling the official travel of Secretariat staff at all levels, inter alia, to represent the United Nations at conferences and meetings of an intergovernmental, inter-agency or non-governmental nature, including the meetings of United Nations bodies and conferences and meetings held by the specialized agencies. ST/SGB/207 introduced new procedures requiring prior authorization of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General for all travel of staff members to conferences and meetings whether financed from regular budget or extrabudgetary funds. This superseded Administrative Instruction ST/AI/305 dated 27 May 1983, which concerns "United Nations representation at international conferences and meetings". ST/SGB/207 was much wider in scope than ST/AI/305. This also superseded the Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/181 dated 31 December 1980 dealing with "Control of travel on official business", whereby the heads of departments and offices were delegated the authority to approve travel on official business on the basis of quarterly travel plans submitted to them. In announcing the establishment of new procedures, Administrative Instruction ST/AI/319 dated 12 September 1984 indicated that official travel for purposes not related to the attendance at conferences or meetings would continue to be approved by the heads of departments or offices.

3/ See the agreement between the United Nations and the International Labour Organisation (ILO), which provides the following:

1. "Representatives of the United Nations shall be invited to attend meetings...";
2. "Representatives of the International Labour Organisation shall be invited to attend meetings..."

17. In the light of experience gained, this bulletin of the Secretary-General was revised as ST/SGB/207/Rev.1 dated 16 December 1987 with a view to strengthening the related procedures. The main purpose of the bulletin is to control official travel either for substantive representation or for the provision of Secretariat support services, requiring prior authorization from the Executive Office of the Secretary-General.

18. Some entities of the United Nations (UNDP 4/, UNICEF 5/, UNEP 6/, UNFPA 7/, UNU 8/ and UNHCR 9/) have their own internal instructions regarding representation in accordance with ST/SGB/207. In particular, those of the UNDP and UNICEF deal with "representation" proper in a comprehensive manner. In the case of UNDP, instructions are clear about representation by providing a framework for determining and meeting the representational responsibilities and needs of the Organization within the available resources. It has also separate guidelines on official travel 10/.

19. Most departments and offices do not have internal instructions or guidelines in written form, except those which deal with the control of official travel rather than "representation". As paragraph 1 of ST/AI/319 states, the action of instituting new procedures for limiting and controlling the travel of Secretariat staff on official business is "an integral part of the management, improvement and cost reduction programme." Consequently, departments and offices have given instructions mainly on travel. Therefore, apart from ST/SGB/207/Rev.1, no other Administrative Issuances specifically deal with representation proper. The Inspector feels that the departments concerned should give appropriate instructions and guidelines specifically on representation with emphasis on the quality and substance of representation.

20. ST/SGB/207/Rev.1 is the only instrument at this moment to provide procedures concerning the representation of the United Nations. It sets forth procedures at several stages for representation, such as: the handling of official invitations to conferences and meetings; preparation for

4/ Instructions for determining UNDP representation meetings (not related to country and/or inter-country programmes and projects), UNDP/PROG/FIELD/169 - UNDP/PROG/HQTRS/165, 1st February 1985.

5/ Procedure for UNICEF representation at international meetings, EXD-2824, 2 November 1981.

6/ Travel and representation at meetings, UNEP/EDB/77, 22 February 1983.

7/ Guidelines for determining UNFPA representation at meetings, UNFPA/CM/87/71 - UNFPA/DR/87/68 - UNFPA/RR/87/68, 19 December 1987.

8/ Administrative Instruction on travel of UNU staff and consultants on mission, UNU/AI/37/Rev.1, 1st February 1980.

9/ Instructions for official travel for Headquarters staff, UNHCR/IOM/4/88, 8 January 1988.

10/ Travel of UNDP staff and consultants, UNDP/ADM/FIELD/1479 - UNDP/ADM/HQTRS/737, 12 November 1986.

participation; instructions to participants as representatives; and reporting. The implementation of specific procedures under ST/SGB/207/Rev.1 will be examined in the next chapters. However, ST/SGB/207/Rev.1 should have included some basic principles related to representation of the Organization. Furthermore, it is evident that the services and behaviour of staff members at conferences and meetings are bound by Staff Regulations and Rules as well. ST/SGB/207/Rev.1 highlighted the control of official business, thereby successfully tightening the procedures with respect to "representation". However, it should clearly state the objectives and principles of representation in conformity with the provisions of the Charter. This would assist departments and offices to develop their internal instructions and guidelines, which would make staff members aware of the good quality of representation. In this respect, ST/AI/305 was more precise than ST/SGB/207/Rev.1.

III. INVITATIONS TO CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS

21. The basis for the representation of the United Nations is the official invitation. However, attendance at conferences and meetings by United Nations officials is also based upon formal agreements between the United Nations itself and the specialized agencies. In such a case, invitations are not issued due to existing mechanisms.

22. Invitations are generally received in written form, directly to the head of departments and offices, or through the Representation Unit. In some cases, invitations are also extended orally, mostly to those meetings held at Headquarters. There are also cases in which, instead of being addressed to the head of departments and offices, an invitation is sent directly to particular officials whose participation in the meeting is expected or desired. As a result, there is no way of knowing who is attending inter-agency meetings, nor is there a possibility to ensure an effective and substantive co-ordination of the United Nations participation. This issue has been the subject of the Secretary-General's communication to the executive heads of the United Nations system so as to develop a generally acceptable procedure which would facilitate a system-wide co-ordination in the field of representation. Nevertheless, this practice still persists in some inviting organizations.

23. With regard to the issuance of invitations, ST/SGB/207 does not provide any precise deadline. Nonetheless, there are provisions related indirectly to this issue. Namely, paragraph 3 states that "...heads of departments and offices should submit to the Director of the Representation Unit..." the request seeking authorization for travel to conferences or meetings "at least two months prior to the commencement of each conference or meeting". Accordingly, invitations have to be sent at least two months before the commencement of a meeting. Otherwise, it would be impossible to implement the above-mentioned provisions.

24. In most cases, invitations are received well before the commencement of a conference or meeting, although there is still a significant portion of invitations received just a few days before the commencement of meetings. In such cases, it is obviously very difficult to undertake serious preparation so as to ensure effective and useful participation by the United Nations representatives.

25. A particular deficiency in sending invitations is the lack of supporting documents which should normally be attached to each invitation. These documents would be necessary as an aid for determining participation. A great number of inviting organizations generally extend invitations solely with the agenda of the meeting. In addition, such invitations usually reach a few days before the commencement of the meeting when there is insufficient time to ask and await documentation. Under these circumstances, there is no wonder to question the seriousness of the substantive preparation for meetings, as well as the effectiveness of officials' participation in conferences and meetings.

26. The Inspector has come to conclude that the issuance of invitations sent to departments and offices of the United Nations is generally justified because of the relevance, importance and significance of the subjects contained in the agenda of the meeting. Nevertheless, in some cases, the

inviting organization extends invitations merely for reasons of institutional courtesy or in order to get invited in turn by taking advantage of the principle of reciprocity. In the case of rejection of an invitation, the organizer sometimes insists on acceptance by writing or repeated telephone calls, so that under this pressure the invited department feels obliged to accept the invitation for the sake of acceptance.

27. On the other hand, there are key meetings to which some United Nations entities are not invited. During his consultation mission to UNDP, the Inspector was told that the organization had not been invited to attend certain meetings of the FAO or those of the World Bank, even though the issues were of direct concern to UNDP.

28. Once received, invitations have to be processed first by departments and then at Headquarters in New York by the Representation Unit of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (see chapter IV).

29. According to paragraphs 8 and 9 of ST/SGB/207, all invitations received at Headquarters, as well as directly by departments and offices or by individuals, "are to be forwarded immediately to the Executive Office of the Secretary-General for the attention of the Director of the Representation Unit", or "should be brought to the attention of the Representation Unit" in order to obtain authorization for travel to meetings. In practice, however, this procedure has not been regularly implemented. For instance, the Director of the Unit is not always informed of the receipt and acceptance of invitations by United Nations departments and offices. Furthermore, it comes to the Representation Unit as a surprise to get to know that representatives of such and such United Nations departments are attending a conference or meeting. It happened, for example, that prior to important meetings as ECOSOC the Representation Unit decided to ask departments to provide information on the invitations which they had actually already received. The Representation Unit does it generally by a letter saying, *inter alia*, that "the Representation Unit understands that your office has received invitation for the conference to be held...". This proves the passiveness of some departments and offices in implementing the provisions of ST/SGB/207.

30. Invitations channelled to and from offices in Geneva and Vienna should go through the Office of the Director-General at UNOG and UNOV. Some officials consider this procedure as cumbersome. The Inspector comes to conclude that the functioning of these offices contributes to ensure better co-ordination and elimination of confusion in dealing with the numerous invitations which are circulated in Geneva and Vienna.

31. Some departments do not forward invitations to the Representation Unit alleging that the participation in the meetings concerned will not incur any costs to the United Nations. This practice cannot be accepted since there are other very important factors which could influence authorization, such as, co-ordination, avoidance of duplication, political considerations (as for meetings held in South Africa), etc. (For the forwarding of the invitations received to the Representation Unit, see chapter IV.)

32. Five United Nations entities are authorized, under the provisions of ST/SGB/207, to respond directly to invitations 11/. However, they are

11/ These entities are: UNHCR, UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA and UNU. It is evident that this exception has been made because of the very nature of their activity.

requested to notify in advance the Executive Office of the Secretary-General of their scheduled participation of a representational nature, through advanced bi-monthly lists when possible, or by telegram or telephone when necessary. This is to enable the Executive Office of the Secretary-General to better co-ordinate the overall representational activity of the United Nations in order to avoid duplication and overlapping, thereby achieving savings both in the financial and human resources of the Organization.

33. The Inspector was told that this requirement was not generally met. Some of the above-mentioned entities do not notify their intended attendance at the international meeting, or do it after the meeting. Such a practice has jeopardized the adequate co-ordination of the United Nations representation.

34. Due to the above-mentioned deficiencies, the United Nations departments and offices are not informed of overall invitations received by the United Nations. Consequently, they cannot be fully rational when planning their own requests for representation so as to avoid duplication and overlapping.

35. A great number of invitations which are circulated annually throughout the Secretariat of the United Nations normally requires that they be carefully sorted out and dealt with in an appropriate manner. The majority of departments and offices does it accordingly by using several means, such as: simple files, card-index registry and a combination of the two systems.

36. Unfortunately, some departments do not pay great attention to the necessity of keeping invitations in order. They have no statistics or files concerning the invitations received. Under such circumstances, it is very difficult to imagine how these departments can meet their obligations in this field of activity.

37. Except for a small number of United Nations entities whose rules and procedures are precise, invitations are neither summarized nor reviewed periodically (even not annually). In other words, there are neither annual progress reports on invitations received nor analyses of breakdown of invitations on various aspects, such as: inviting organizations, subject matters, invitations accepted/rejected and locations of meetings. In the Inspector's view, this is a great deficiency in the current practice by the majority of United Nations departments and offices, particularly those which have a large representational activity.

IV. PROCEDURES AND MECHANISMS FOR THE DETERMINATION OF REPRESENTATION

A. Decision-making process by departments and offices

38. Before making a request for authorization to the Representation Unit of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, departments and offices proceed to their own selection so as to decide whether the invitation should be accepted or not.

39. According to the replies to the questionnaire, more than 50 and 70 percent of the invitations received in 1985 and 1986 respectively have been rejected at the level of departments and offices. The reasons were: the marginality of the subject matter from the point of view of the departmental mandate; the unavailability of suitable representatives; the need to avoid duplication; and particularly the financial constraints. The United Nations departments and offices are very selective in accepting invitations to conferences and meetings which will be held away from their Headquarters. This is mainly because of financial consideration. In concrete terms, while being substantively interested in participating in a given meeting, the department rejects the invitation which would incur high travel expenses.

40. The procedure for making this selection at the departmental level includes: consultations within the department, the verification and analysis of the agenda and of the documentation for the meeting (if available), the collection of background information from the inviting organization, and discussions with the Representation Unit. Based on this, the department concerned evaluates the importance and usefulness of its attendance at the meeting and, consequently, determines whether to make a request or not.

41. The list of the invitations accepted by the department should then be submitted, in the form of request for authorization, to the Director of the Representation Unit.

42. Before the submission, heads of departments and offices should assure themselves that the proposed participation is essential and substantive, unavoidable and in conformity with the Secretary-General's efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Secretariat.

43. The main reasons for requesting approval for representation should be: the irrefutable relevance and the evident importance of the agenda subject matters and their direct concern to the department; the opportunity of a substantial contribution to the meeting from the representative of the department; and the availability of funds and staff.

44. The department's request should include: indications on the name(s) of designated official(s) to participate in the meeting; his/her (their) title(s) and levels in the department; purpose and justification of participation and period of attendance; estimated cost of attendance, etc.

45. The criteria for the designation of representatives to participate in the meetings generally include: grade and experience, competence and involvement in the substantive activity of the subject for the meeting, and seniority.

46. During the course of the study, the Inspector found numerous inconsistencies in the departmental and office actions when preparing the submission of their requests for approval. Some of them are enumerated in chapter III.

47. First of all, the content of the request is a problem. A great number of departments and offices do not provide the Representation Unit with all necessary indications, which reflects superficiality in approaching this issue. The scarcity of elements necessary to evaluate the justification of the request does not permit an easy, simple and timely processing for authorization. The Representation Unit has to write back to the department concerned to request additional information so as to make an accurate evaluation in conformity with the provisions of ST/SGB/207 and also of: "Guidelines for the dispatch of planning missions in respect of meetings and conferences held away from the United Nations Headquarters locations." ^{12/}.

48. In some cases, departments make partially justified requests for approval: only when travel costs are involved; or only for the most important meetings whose authorization is inevitable; or only for meetings to be held outside of their Headquarters; or only for a meeting where the department is required to be represented ex officio (for example, as chairman). In all other cases, these departments and offices do not submit requests for approval to the Representation Unit at all.

49. Some departments decide on their own initiative that they do not need authorization for participation in meetings simply because there is an agreement governing representation. The existence of such an agreement which only offers the possibility to participate in meetings does not preclude the necessity of sending invitations.

50. Other departments do not submit requests for approval at all, but only send the lists of the travels they intend to undertake, or provide post-factum information on travels which are already undertaken for representational purposes.

51. There are misunderstandings regarding the applicability of the provisions under ST/SGB/207 to the staff who work for the entities of an independent nature of activity. Some of them have not requested authorization for the participation of their staff members in meetings, alleging their independence vis-à-vis the United Nations. However, there should be no confusion or misunderstanding in this respect. The staff of those entities are part of the central personnel system of the United Nations, and all costs associated with the work of these entities and their secretariat are covered from the regular budget. Therefore, the provisions of ST/SGB/207 apply to the United Nations staff members regardless of the nature of the departments and offices they serve.

52. The practice of the Regional Economic Commissions presents particular and specific problems. Travel requirements for conferences and meetings of the Regional Economic Commissions are somewhat different from those of other United Nations entities. Their staff members attend conferences and meetings of three categories:

- (i) held within the region and organized by the Regional Economic Commissions themselves;

^{12/} General Assembly resolution 41/177 of 5 December 1986, annex.

- (ii) held within the region, but organized by third parties; and
- (iii) held outside of the region.

The difficulties arise with the authorization for the attendance at conferences and meetings of the category (i), since this represents special circumstances. The Inspector is of the opinion that rational and acceptable solutions should be found to this problem.

B. Decision-making process by the Representation Unit of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General

53. The Unit's mandate is provided by ST/SGB/207 to authorize the travel requested by the United Nations departments and offices for representational purposes. In dealing with this travel request, the Unit refers to the procedures under ST/SGB/207/Rev.1 in consistency with the Secretary-General's objectives to improve the efficiency and effectiveness in representation.

54. The approval procedure consists of several important actions which the Unit undertakes in order to meet the organizations' commitments for representation in a most economic and effective way, weighing benefits against the resources invested.

55. In reviewing the departmental submissions, the Unit starts with the examination of a key question whether the requested participation is not only "necessary" but also essential. At the same time, the Unit has to check the travel budget, thus harmonizing the substantive side of the participation and the financial consideration. The Unit has also to see whether there exists any possibility of combining travel for representational purposes with those for other official missions. Furthermore, the Unit takes into consideration the political implication of the participation of the United Nations officials, grade, length of attendance, etc.

56. In order to evaluate correctly each travel request, the Unit has developed a close co-operation with departments and offices, for example by exchanging correspondence with their heads when appropriate, by requesting additional information, etc. It should be noted that a positive response and recommendation by a head of a department does not automatically imply authorization.

57. According to ST/SGB/207, the Unit has to consult the Office of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation about travel requests for attendance at conferences and meetings in the economic and social fields. The requested travel is then considered for approval after careful verification of the budgetary allocation.

58. The Unit examines different types of representation: of political character; for substantive participation; for provision of Secretariat services; for special assignments at meetings (i.e., as chairman, rapporteur).

59. The Unit's decision is given in the form of authorization or refusal. A partial acceptance is also granted, for example, by reducing the number of participants. In the present financial situation, the Unit is sometimes constrained to restrict participation to the minimum, even in cases where the subject matter of the agenda is relevant to the department's mandate.

60. The Unit issues monthly computerized lists of all travel requests reviewed, as well as annual reports containing statistics on the total operation, including comparison with the previous years.

61. According to these reports and statistics, 224 travel requests were reviewed and 78 were not authorized in 1985, and out of 179 submissions, 27 were turned down in 1986. This represents net savings of US\$ 229,642 in 1985 and US\$ 139,147 in 1986.

62. Apart from the Director of the Unit, the staff assigned to handle the procedures established by ST/SGB/207 are only one Professional on loan from the Department of Administration and Management and one General Services staff.

V. PARTICIPATION IN CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS

A. Preparation for participation

63. ST/SGB/207 provides for the substantive preparation of the United Nations representatives for participation in conferences and meetings (paragraph 12). The responsibility and the co-ordinating role in the preparatory process belong to the head of the department from which the representative is designated. The provisions precisely indicate consultations and briefings both within and outside of the departments and offices concerned.

64. It goes without saying that this preparatory effort is a prerequisite for maximizing the effectiveness of the participation with a view to properly ensuring the presentation of the positions of the United Nations at international conferences and meetings.

65. Preparation should be made in accordance with the type and importance of the meeting concerned and particularly its relevance to the department's activity. An inviting organization may also make a request for specific preparation. The methodology used in organizing the preparatory work does not, in principle, differ from one department to another. It is usually the analysis of the agenda and purposes of the meeting which entail research, briefings, consultations and finally the preparation of statements or papers, if any, to the deliberations in the meeting.

66. Except for a small number of United Nations entities (e.g., UNDP, UNICEF, UNEP, UNHCR) which have precise and developed internal instructions, there exists no well-defined departmental policy, rules or guidelines governing the preparation. The preparatory work in many departments and offices is handled spontaneously, or even as a routine work.

67. Some departments have developed a very useful preparatory process for internal co-operation. In cases where the proposed official to attend the meeting is not fully familiar with the technical aspects of the subject of the agenda, briefing documents are prepared by an appropriate branch (policy co-ordinating branch, for example) to set out the issues and the department's position on such an agenda item.

68. The staff member assigned to represent the department prepares his/her contributions to the meetings, i.e., reports, studies, statements, position papers, draft resolutions, etc. The form depends on different factors, such as: the department's interest, objectives of each participation, the type of the meeting and the requests of the organizer. These contributions are cleared by the head of the department concerned.

69. With regard to the reports, statements and messages of the Secretary-General, they are prepared in a number of ways. While substantive reports are normally prepared by the department responsible for the subject, other statements or messages of the Secretary-General are drafted by a department concerned, by one of several elements in the Office of the Secretary-General or by the Office of Research and Collection of Information. All of these are submitted to the Office of the Secretary-General for approval. They are, then, transmitted to the meetings by the personal representatives of the Secretary-General or by other officials attending the meeting on his behalf.

B. Participation

70. ST/SGB/207 provides that the United Nations representatives should endeavour to present and explain the United Nations objectives; provide for information on the United Nations policies, actions and procedures; establish and maintain contacts among other participants; and ensure that the activities of the meeting are in conformity with the United Nations programmes and policies. ST/SGB/207 does not enter into other details, such as: the type of participation of the United Nations officials; the form of contribution to the conference deliberations; the length of attendance, etc.

71. With regard to the nature of participation of representatives, it can be classified into two major categories: (i) active participation; and (ii) passive participation.

72. Active participation embraces an engaged activity of participants in the meetings, for example, by pronouncing statements, submitting reports or working papers, participating in drafting resolutions or at working groups or other committees, and particularly having specific functions as chairmanship, rapporteurs, etc. As explained in chapter II, many cases of United Nations representation can be as "observer" or "consultative" status without vote. However, the status of participation in the meetings has nothing to do with the nature of participation. Whatever the status of the representatives is (either as members of a given meeting or as "observers"), participants could play an active role in meeting. Attendance at conferences and meetings on behalf of the Secretary-General, which is very special in the sense that it has political implications, falls also under this category. Such an attendance would require the transmission of messages, statements or reports, and is active by nature.

73. The second category of participation consists of simple presence without taking any part in the meeting. This does not entail any contribution, either to the conference deliberations during a meeting, or to the departments concerned after the meeting. Thus, this type of participation is merely for reasons of protocol or institutional courtesy, and is passive by nature.

74. In the majority of cases, the United Nations representatives participate actively in conferences and meetings. Some offices send representatives, as a policy rule, only to those meetings to which they have active and substantive contribution to make. However, there have been a number of cases in which participation was passive.

75. The length of the representatives' attendance depends on various factors, such as: the relevance of the subject matters under discussion at the meeting; the duration of the meeting; and particularly the available funds. While attendance at meetings of short period (2-3 days) and those of great relevance to the department mandate is usually for the full duration of the meeting, it is for a limited period when funds are limited and when only a small number of agenda items is of interest to the department.

76. The Inspector has found that more than 50 percent of the United Nations participation in conferences and meetings in 1986 was for a limited period.

77. With respect to the use of field and liaison offices for representational purposes, the practice of the United Nations departments and offices is rather different. UNDP Resident Representatives are widely used to attend meetings in the country or countries which they cover, either on behalf of UNDP itself, or covering the interest of other United Nations entities as resident co-ordinators. UNICEF also transfers the responsibility to attend meetings to its field offices which are close to the meeting location. The practice at UNFPA, UNHCR and UNU has been found similar.

78. However, there are other United Nations entities which do not use their liaison offices for attendance at conferences and meetings. Some of them, for example, are located far away from New York and send their representatives regularly to the meetings held in New York, despite the existence of important and numerous liaison offices in Headquarters.

79. According to the replies to the questionnaire, the United Nations departments and offices are represented in conferences and meetings generally only by one person. This issue is also under the control of the Representation Unit which may reduce the number of proposed representatives if it is considered to be excessive.

80. In this connection, it should be pointed out that UNDP has established a so-called "one voice" principle in order to ensure that the expenditures for representation are kept to the minimum level. According to this principle, staff members of UNDP represent at international meetings also the funds and programmes under the UNDP's administrative umbrella, and vice versa. This principle is fully observed in the representational practice of UNDP, which has resulted in important cost savings.

C. Reporting

81. ST/SGB/207 explicitly provides for a "report covering developments of significance to the United Nations...", which the representatives have to provide for upon returning from a meeting, "as appropriate, to the Secretary-General and/or interested departments and offices." A copy of this report is to be addressed to the Director of the Representation Unit.

82. Numerous forms of reports are produced. One of the forms is a comprehensive written report which presents the summary of the conference deliberations and analysis of main trends and decisions of significance highlighting the matters of particular interest to the department, as well as the usefulness of the meeting decisions for the department's activity and for the objectives of the United Nations as a whole. Another form is a short oral report to the head of the department and, if the subject is of general interest, to the meetings of high-level officials. At some departments, the representative only briefs relevant senior officials upon his/her return from a meeting. In some cases, reports are not prepared or submitted at all.

83. As already pointed out, at those United Nations departments which have established internal guidelines and instructions (as UNDP, UNICEF, UNU), reporting duties are developed and precise, and reports are regularly prepared and submitted. In some entities, the failure to submit mission report, or to follow-up on action recommended in the mission report, may influence decisions

on the renewal of contracts, promotion and the granting of within-grade salary increments. In other entities, without the submission of a mission report summary, the official concerned would not get his/her travel claims cleared.

84. The specific case is the United Nations Office of the Law of the Sea whose participation in meetings is reported to the General Assembly in the annual report of the Secretary-General, under the item "Law of the Sea".

85. The Inspector has found that, despite the explicit provisions of ST/SGB/207, the United Nations departments and offices do not regularly forward copies of reports to the Representation Unit: only approximately 10 percent of the total number of meetings attended. Furthermore, in the majority of departments and offices, oral reports prevail over written ones. This can partially explain the lack of copies that the Representation Unit should receive from departments. Concretely speaking, the number of copies sent to the Unit is by far below the number of the reports submitted within departments and offices. Since a large proportion of reports is made in oral form, not many copies are made available to the Representation Unit.

VI. FINANCIAL ASPECTS

A. Costs of representation

86. The Programme Budget for the bienniums 1984-1985 and 1986-1987 provided US\$ 20,993,800 and US\$ 22,159,900 respectively for travel of staff on official business. Therefore for the years 1985 and 1986, US\$ 10,496,900 and US\$ 11,079,950 were provided from the regular budget. However, this covers several objects of expenditure for travel of staff on official business, only a part of which is provided for the purposes of attending meetings. With regard to extrabudgetary resources, the information is not available as to what extent funds were made available for this purpose.

87. In the light of the serious financial situation facing the Organization, the Secretary-General introduced by ST/SGB/215 (see chapter II) and also in view of the requirement in General Assembly resolution 41/213, restrictive measures, including a 20 percent reduction in costs relating, inter alia, to travel.

88. With regard to official travel to attend conferences and meetings, the Accounts Division provided the Inspector with the expenditures from the regular budget in respect of two code numbers (222: Travel of staff to attend official meetings; 227: Travel and per diem of staff attending ad hoc expert group meetings) as the followings:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Code 222</u> (US\$, 000)	<u>Code 227</u> (US\$, 000)
1985	2,083	4
1986	1,330	-

89. However, it has become clear that these figures do not represent the expenditures which the report would present as the costs of representation. It is because the code 222 does not concern only official travels to conferences and meetings to represent the United Nations, but also to provide Secretariat services. Since there is no sub-code number on official travels to attend meetings, it is not possible to obtain information from the Accounts Division on the basis of code numbers nor from the Budget Division. However, this information cannot be presented, since it was not provided in a comparable manner. This difficulty concerns both regular budget and extra-budgetary funds. Thus, it is not very easy to determine the actual expenditures. In the Inspector's view, there should be separate sub-accounts on official travels to attend meetings as representatives and to provide Secretariat services.

90. What is certain is that, as a result of the screening procedure through the Representation Unit, the net savings generated were US\$ 229,642 in 1985 and US\$ 139,149 in 1986 (see chapter IV, B).

B. Financial control

91. Under paragraph 6 of ST/SGB/207, "before certifying authorization for official staff travel to conferences and meetings, executive and/or administrative officers are responsible for determining that such travel has been approved by the Executive Office of the Secretary-General." As a result of sampling tests of travel authorizations (PT8s) for the year 1986, the Inspector has found many travels effectuated which were coded as 242 (other official travel of staff) instead of 222. Several incorrect cases of coding were also discovered concerning other items. Thus, paragraph 6 of ST/SGB/207 was not properly implemented.

92. Under Administrative Instruction ST/AI/289/Rev.1 of 12 September 1983, it is the functions of both certifying officers and approving officers to ensure that proposed obligations or expenditures are properly classified and coded in accordance with the codes indicated in the Allotment Account Codes Handbook. In addition, in accordance with the provisions of Financial Rules 104.2 and 110.9, the responsibility for the examination of an obligation and the determination of its validity rest with the certifying officers. In the view of the Inspector, the practice of internal borrowings from other available funds, as a temporary measure, also hampered the control of this field. Internal Auditors also made similar observations that this requirement was not met with respect to the coding of official travels (in particular, codes 222 and 242). In other terms, executive and/or administrative officers were responsible for determining that the travel concerned has been approved by the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, only in respect of travels which required authorization. Therefore, when a travel was coded as 242, or any number other than 222, executive and/or administrative officers were simply exempt from such a responsibility. This represented the weakness of procedures provided under ST/SGB/207.

93. A question was raised to the Accounts Division, according to which its approving officers do not usually look into the details of the code number unless there are obvious mistakes. Therefore, it is up to the certifying officers to interpret the definitions of codes 222 and 242. The Inspector held discussions with some administrative or certifying officers in this respect. It seems that the interpretations and practices related to this matter differ from one department to another. For instance, some departments use 222 for official travels to attend the meetings which are listed in the budget, and 242 is used for other official travels, including attendance at other meetings. In the case of other departments, only 242 is used for other official travels. This may be due to the fact that there are only a few trips of the first type. In any case, there should be uniform rules and practices in this area.

94. It was in the light of above-mentioned weakness that ST/SGB/207/Rev.1 included new provisions. Under paragraphs 6 and 7, executive and/or administrative officers are responsible not only to determine that travel has been approved by the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, but also to so state in form PT8 under item 12. SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS. Moreover, before authorizing the procurement of tickets and reservations for any official staff

travel to conferences and meetings, the authorizing travel officer is responsible for verifying that form PT8 certifies to that effect (paragraph 8).

95. Given that the revision of ST/SGB/207 took place almost at the end of his consultation missions, the Inspector does not have information on the implementation of relevant paragraphs. However, he strongly endorses the new procedures, which would certainly strengthen the financial control of official travel to conferences and meetings.

VII. MONITORING PROCEDURE

96. Apart from the provision regarding the submission of reports, ST/SGB/207 does not indicate any mention in respect of review, periodic summaries, analysis and assessment of the usefulness and effectiveness of the overall representation of the United Nations departments and offices. Therefore, it is up to individual departments and offices to make their own arrangements for monitoring procedures regarding the evaluation process.

97. However, the problem is that most departments and offices have not established monitoring procedures. Some of them do not have even any evaluation exercise. Under these circumstances, it is difficult to imagine how these departments could organize their representation which requires follow-up activity which could be done only on the basis of the review and assessment of each participation.

98. Some entities have included in their internal instructions and guidelines a monitoring procedure. The Inspector noted that their representational activity is well managed with more order and discipline than that of other departments without any rules or guidelines.

99. In the case of UNDP, a monitoring procedure was established at all stages of representation. There are mechanisms for the detailed review and evaluation of invitations, for the designation of representatives, for the preparation for participation, for the participation itself and for reporting once a meeting is over. Based on this, regular periodic (annually or even quarterly) performance reports and assessments of the overall work related to representation have been prepared.

100. The procedure for systematic monitoring is a symptom for some of the United Nations departments and offices which have a large representation activity. However, there are departments which have not introduced the monitoring procedure as such, but have still developed a kind of compact evaluation system in making evaluation on a case-by-case basis through executive officers.

101. On the other hand, a few offices (as ESCWA) have a monitoring procedure for representation which is incorporated into the wider monitoring system (as "monitoring of consultants, travel to meetings and ad hoc expert groups").

VIII. NEW TECHNOLOGY

102. The research of ways and means to rationalize the representational activity, particularly to make it less expensive, has led the Inspector to examine the possibility of introducing advanced technology in the field of representation. The question is whether face-to-face conferencing can be replaced by more economical means with the same efficiency. Among various systems, teleconferencing seems most appropriate as an alternative.

103. A teleconferencing is a meeting conducted through electronic means between participants being in two or more remote locations. The progress of new technologies greatly contributed to the development of techniques for teleconferencing.

104. Depending on the capabilities offered, the technique for teleconferencing could be generally classified into three types: (a) electronic mail based system, (b) audio conferencing, and (c) audiovisual conferencing.

105. The electronic mail based system (a) is also called "computer conferencing". All participants, wherever they are, have access to the same computer, either directly or through a network, as well as to the same file on that computer by using a terminal. A participant, who wishes to contribute something to the teleconference, writes his notes using word processing. This information is stored in that particular file, from which all participants can read on the screen by retrieving this information. In the same manner, they can write their comments or other notes into the same file. This type of teleconference is not tied with time factor and could continue over years.

106. The audio conference (b) allows conference participants remote from one another to communicate among themselves through voice using audio equipment. This could also offer participants between sites the capability to share graphics, texts or diagrams by facsimile or an electronic blackboard.

107. The most sophisticated way is to use telecommunications for visual and auditory communication as (c). This system is also called videoconferencing and visioconferencing ^{13/}. This technique functions by means of televisions or videos assisted by computer, to which the images are transmitted through satellite or other communication lines, thereby allowing participants to "view" the images of participants of the conference. With the most advanced technique of this system, they could view, interact and talk with participants in a remote location simultaneously (in an "on-line" manner). In addition, this provides the possibility to transmit and view slides and documents. Technically speaking, the manner of showing images is either "one-way" or "two-way interactive". The former enables the participants to see and hear the conference leader, but not vice versa. It is the latter that allows both the leader and participants to see, hear and discuss interactively in a remote location. There are already conference centres which provide this service.

^{13/} Cf. JIU report on "Management of interpretation services in the United Nations system" (A/41/648).

Depending on the memory storage, the type of equipment used and transmission data rates available, the frequency of updating images varies from several times a minute to less than a second.

108. Until the early 1980's, the costs for sending a video (television) signal between remote sites required full bandwidth capability (90 Mbps) which was extremely expensive. The introduction of the motion processor or codec which digitizes the video signal eliminates redundancies in each picture frame (such as stationary background information) and compresses the signal to require less bandwidth made teleconferencing an economical communications option.

109. As a result of the installation of digital networks between the most important cities in Europe, United States and Canada, the teleconferencing service has become an economical device. In the case of Geneva, the Geneva International Conference Centre is equipped with the teleconferencing service, which could be very well utilized by the United Nations, given that the electronic link between the United States, Canada and Switzerland is assured by satellite INTELSAT.

110. Thus, a teleconferencing system offers different possibilities to conference participants located in different places, such as: to communicate, exchange information, share and interact through graphics, figures and printed texts, etc. Both as a substitute for and a supplement to face-to-face meetings, a teleconferencing system, particularly the audiovisual or video conferencing, would enable to considerably reduce expenses, save time as well as to increase efficiency. Moreover, applications of this system could be developed according to the needs of each conference and the advancement of new technologies.

111. The Inspector has widely discussed this issue with the officials concerned at the United Nations departments and offices, on the basis of the questionnaire which included a particular section concerning the use of new technology in representation. All departments which have replied to this section do admit the usefulness of the technological innovation. Some of them already use computer communications and facsimile machines, which has resulted, to a certain extent, in prompt and efficient process of conference documents and translation. However, all replies are negative regarding the introduction of new telecommunication technologies as a means to conduct conferences and meetings. They feel it reluctant to replace representation by teleconferencing for the time being. One of the reasons is that the role of representation is not limited to the submission of reports or announcement of statements; rather, many substantive decisions are taken outside of meetings through consultations or personal contacts.

IX. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Conclusions

112. The processing of invitations is the first important step for representation. The fact that, in some cases, invitations have been sent and dealt with superficially reflects the wrong concept of representation, thereby exerting a negative influence on the participation of United Nations staff members in conferences and meetings. Consequently, it is necessary to bring order, discipline and control in the issuance and processing of invitations.

113. The deadline for sending invitations at least two months before the commencement of the meeting should be reaffirmed and fully respected. Since all conferences and meetings, except for special and urgent cases, are regularly planned well in advance, the practice of sending invitations a few days before the commencement of the meeting without any documentation represents the lack of order and discipline from the part of inviting organizations.

114. Under the serious present financial situation, the practice of inviting for reasons of purely protocol or institutional courtesy should be abolished, although, with regard to attendance at opening or closing ceremonies of conferences and meetings held at the same location as the departments or offices, the issuance of invitations can be justified.

115. The increasing tendency to reject invitations in 1986 compared with 1985 (50 and 70 percent respectively) proves the stronger selectivity of departments and offices in accepting the invitations which require travel to outside of Headquarters. This is the result of their responsive attitudes towards the current financial crisis.

116. The procedures for the handling of the invitations received and for the submission of requests for authorization should be streamlined, particularly under the current financial crisis of the Organization.

117. The Representation Unit plays a very important role in co-ordinating and controlling the overall representational activity of the United Nations. However, in the Inspector's opinion, the Unit is not structured accordingly from the administrative point of view. Thus, the Unit is constantly overburdened, which has jeopardized the successful fulfilment of its responsibilities.

118. The preparatory process within departments and offices has to be better organized and strengthened in order to eliminate superficiality and routine in such an important issue.

119. The present financial constraints faced by the Organization impose a much more efficient, rational and effective attendance at conferences and meetings. Departments and offices have to be guided by a general principle that decisions to participate in meetings should not be made unless they examine whether the benefits from this participation would substantially outweigh both the financial expenses and the workload involved.

120. Despite the fact that an increasing use of field and liaison offices could contribute to generating important savings in travel expenses, only a small portion of these offices is utilized, which should be reconsidered by the Organization in its serious financial situation.

121. The departmental control in respect of important aspects of representation (first the need to travel, then the length of attendance, the number of officials composing the departmental representation, etc.) has not been very tight. The Inspector strongly believes that control only by the Representation Unit would be insufficient to achieve the objectives of ST/SGB/207/Rev.1. This would require the better co-operation, organization and control by individual departments themselves.

122. It is necessary to bring more order and discipline in the reporting stage of representation and to fully implement the appropriate provisions of ST/SGB/207/Rev.1, to which heads of departments and offices should pay more attention.

123. The procedures and provisions related to financial control have not been properly implemented. Particularly, the Inspector has found inconsistencies in accounting practice, which resulted in difficulties to ascertain the right accounting code number allocated for representation. There should be uniform rules and practices to discipline the financial control.

124. The representational activity of the United Nations departments and offices should be under constant control regarding the efficiency and the use of human and financial resources. It would be impossible for departments to maintain this control without reviewing their own experience. It is on the basis of their participation in international meetings that they could determine the future participation and, where appropriate, make recommendations for further improvements in their representation.

125. With regard to the use of new technology such as teleconferencing in representation, the Inspector limited the consideration to marking a position. It does not seem possible, for the time being, to introduce existing teleconferencing systems in the field of representation. He believes, however, that it will be possible, in the near future, to use the advanced technological systems in representation.

B. Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Secretary-General should further request the United Nations departments and offices to strictly observe the provisions under ST/SGB/207/Rev.1, with particular emphasis on the time limits regarding the issuance of invitations and the submission of the requests for authorization, as well as on the substantive preparation for and proper participation of the United Nations representatives in conferences and meetings.

Recommendation 2

The Representation Unit of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General should be administratively restructured so as to increase its working capacity in implementing the present co-ordinating and approval procedures under ST/SGB/207/Rev.1, thereby contributing further to the achievement of the objectives put forward therein (see paragraphs 61, 62 and 117).

Recommendation 3

(a) The practice of passive participation should be reconsidered and seriously reduced (para. 73).

(b) Attendance of the United Nations departments at conferences and meetings should be limited to one person.

(c) Wherever liaison or field office exists in the venue of a meeting, travel from Headquarters for representational purposes should not be allowed, unless the meeting is of highly specialized nature.

Recommendation 4

The length of attendance at meetings held outside of Headquarters, which would incur high expenditures for travel and per diem, should be kept to the minimum.

Recommendation 5

(a) Rules and practices in the financial area should be made uniform, and corrective measures should be taken to implement the related provisions for financial control.

(b) Official travel to attend conferences and meetings should be correctly coded (as 222) without mixing with other codes.

(c) The sub-code number for representation travels should be introduced in order to separate this type of expenditure from any others, thereby ensuring better financial control.

Recommendation 6

The United Nations departments and offices should constantly review and evaluate overall representational activity in a comprehensive and critical manner. Particularly, departments which have a large activity of representation should establish appropriate monitoring procedures in order to avoid superficiality in assessing their activity in representation.

Recommendation 7

The United Nations services dealing with technical innovations should further follow the developments in the use of new technologies with a view to introducing advanced systems as teleconferencing in the field of representation.

