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Report of the Joint Inspection Unit on United Nations documentation and on the organization of the proceedings of the General Assembly and its main bodies

Note by the Secretary-General

1. Under the terms of paragraph 15 of its resolution 2609 (XXIV) of 16 December 1969 and paragraph 5 of resolution 2693 (XXV) of 11 December 1970, the General Assembly requested the Joint Inspection Unit to:

"submit a report to the General Assembly..., through the appropriate channel, setting forth its views on possible improvements in the system used by the United Nations in handling and processing documents before, during and after meetings, including sessions of the General Assembly, and in the organization of the proceedings at such meetings".

2. The Joint Inspection Unit has accordingly submitted the attached report (JIU/REP/71/4).<sup>1/</sup> The Secretary-General and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions will present their observations in due course.

3. Meanwhile the Secretary-General, with the agreement of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, transmits the report to the General Assembly.

<sup>1/</sup> In the interest of economy and in accordance with the recommendations of the General Assembly, there will be a limited initial distribution of the report.

REPORT  
on  
UNITED NATIONS DOCUMENTATION  
and on the  
ORGANISATION OF THE PROCEEDINGS  
of the  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND ITS MAIN BODIES  
by  
THE JOINT INSPECTION UNIT

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## INTRODUCTION

1. In operative paragraph 15 of Resolution 2609 (XXIV), the General Assembly took note of the comments of the Joint Inspection Unit in paragraph 198 of its report (A/7576 and Corr.1) on the need for improving the United Nations meetings system and requested it to "submit a report to the General Assembly at its twenty-fifth session, through the appropriate channel, setting forth its views on possible improvements in the system used by the United Nations in handling and processing documents before, during and after meetings, including sessions of the General Assembly and in the organization of the proceedings of such meetings."
2. The Joint Inspection Unit decided to give high priority to the study requested by the General Assembly and included it in its programme of work for 1970. It felt, however, that in view of the magnitude and comprehensive nature of the study, it would be necessary for members of the Unit to observe at first hand the proceedings of the General Assembly and its committees at its twenty-fifth session and accordingly the Unit would present its report for consideration by the General Assembly at its twenty-sixth session. This information was communicated to the Secretary-General on 11 May 1970 with a request that he pass it on to the General Assembly. He did so in document A/BUR/176 dated 14 September 1970.
3. The General Assembly, in paragraph 5 of Resolution 2693 (XXV), thereupon requested the Joint Inspection Unit to submit its report through the appropriate channels to the Assembly at its twenty-sixth session. Two members of the Joint Inspection Unit attended practically the whole of the twenty-fifth session. Two others joined them half way through the session. During their visit to UN Headquarters the Inspectors observed both plenary meetings and meetings of committees; they had very useful talks with many delegates; they also obtained a considerable amount of information relevant to the study from senior members of the Secretariat. To all of those who gave freely of their time and knowledge to assist the Inspectors in their difficult task, they wish to express their gratitude.
4. This report is divided into two main parts. Part A deals essentially with documentation; Part B - with the proceedings of the General Assembly. However, since there is often a direct relationship between these issues, some of the

Inspectors' conclusions on one subject may have implications on the others. Moreover just as a number of problems observed and commented upon by the Inspectors in the area of documentation did not relate to the General Assembly proper, but to the United Nations Organization as a whole, some of those observed and commented upon in the area of meetings relate not so much to the General Assembly as to the over-all pattern of meetings and conferences of the Organization.

SOME POINTS OF METHODOLOGY

5. As the Inspectors proceeded with their study, they came to the conclusion that it would be vain to hope for any improvement in the "handling and processing" stages of United Nations documents without going to the roots of the problem of United Nations documentation, with specific reference to that of the General Assembly. Moreover any attempt to deal with these documents in the traditional "pre-session" and "in-session" categories would be likewise unrealistic since even what are clearly "pre-session" documents are apt to appear well into, and sometimes even after an Assembly session. The consequences of this situation are discussed later in this report.
6. In the course of their investigation the Inspectors came across obvious wastage both in the production and distribution of documents, many of which are not related to the work of the General Assembly, but which contribute to the overall "documentation explosion" that has become the bane of the United Nations. Whilst seeking wherever possible to fit their study into the general framework set by resolution 2609 (XXIV), the Inspectors consider it appropriate, therefore, to mention such other shortcomings in the field of UN documentation as have come to their notice.
7. The Inspectors noted that many of the deficiencies observed during their first study on documentation with specific reference to the Economic and Social Council (A/7576) were a continuing problem confronting the Organization as a whole. Although, meanwhile, many of the recommendations contained in the above-mentioned report have been endorsed by the General Assembly, ECOSOC and the Secretary-General or have otherwise been conducive to corrective action, some of them seem to require reiteration, whilst others, hitherto not acted upon, remain valid. Where this is the case, the Inspectors have referred back to such recommendations, as they have to decisions taken by the United Nations before or since but not implemented, or insufficiently so.
8. One problem which the Inspectors encountered at the outset was that of obtaining comparable statistics. The only officially published statistics concerning documentation are the half dozen figures that appear in Part 5, Chapter III, Section B, of the Secretary-General's report (in 1970 document A/8001, page 250), as well as those that are given in the Secretary-General's occasional

reports on Publications and Documentation, and even these few figures, supplemented by others provided by the Secretariat, instead of giving a consolidated picture for the Organization as a whole, are given separately for New York and Geneva.

9. This is due, the Inspectors understand, to the fact that the criteria applied in arriving at the results differ in New York and Geneva. In the latter case the figures are weighted by a number of coefficients to take into account the factor of manpower invested at various stages in the production of documentation; in New York this is not done. Since 1970 the Geneva Office keeps both types of statistics: net figures (as in New York) and weighted figures (the traditional Geneva method). It is hoped that as a result the statistics will at last become comparable - to the benefit of analytical studies such as the present one.

10. The lack of readily usable up-to-date statistical data was even more serious as regards the second part of the Inspectors' report since twenty-five years after the establishment of the UN system there seems to exist no standard criteria in the various organizations and offices as to what actually constitutes a "meeting unit". In some cases it is the actual occupancy of a meeting room (with or without service) for a given time; in others it is the announced occupancy (though the meeting may have been later cancelled); in others again it is the number of bodies that may have successively occupied the meeting room within a given time. It was only on 4 March 1971, i.e. when this report was almost completed, that the Secretariat put out for the benefit of the Special Committee on the Rationalization of the Procedures and Organization of the General Assembly a 53 page report headed "Statistical Data on the General Assembly and the Main Committees" (A/AC.149/L.4) which includes much useful, but until then unavailable information.

11. Moreover, as in the case of United Nations documentation, there exists no detailed breakdown of the costs of Committee meetings, General Assembly sessions, etc. As a result, delegations initiating or voting for the initiation of activities involving meetings, are often unaware of the real financial implications of such initiatives. The Inspectors came up against the same problem in writing this report, to the extent that they have had to confine their attempted analyses to such factors as time and general efficiency, leaving aside any hope of gauging in terms of costs the effect of their recommendations. They note, however, that already in 1962-63 a suggestion that such costs be ventilated was made to the

Ad Hoc Committee on the Improvement of the Methods of Work of the General Assembly. The latter did not discuss it. It seems to the Inspectors that the time is ripe for the Assembly to insist that henceforth up-dated figures on this subject too be provided annually by the Secretariat.

12. But then, as this report will show, even the available statistics (though they are becoming increasingly sophisticated) are often of little use for control studies such as this one since they are kept for different purposes.

13. In the absence of adequate basic statistics and of uniform criteria in compiling them, it is evident that a study such as that which has been **requested** of the Joint Inspection Unit is likely to come up against certain unaccountable, and virtually irreconcilable discrepancies. These, however, do not, in the Inspectors' opinion, affect the validity of the main conclusions and recommendations contained in this report. Indeed, to the extent that such discrepancies highlight the inadequacy of existing control procedures they substantiate them.

14. In paragraphs 9 to 16 of their first report on documentation (A/7576), the Inspectors explained how difficult it was to obtain figures for the total cost of documentation in the United Nations. In fact, the only figures available to them at that time (1968) were those published by the Secretary-General in a note on publications and documentation (A/INF/124) which stated, inter alia, that "In most general terms, the cost of conference service expenses (as distinct from those of the substantive units) for the provision of documentation for United Nations bodies might, at present levels, be of the order of \$20 million gross per year".

15. The Inspectors have therefore attempted a calculation of their own and, using only the official figures given in General Assembly documents A/7006 and A/7606 (information annexes to the budget estimates for 1970 and 1971), they have arrived at the following totals for the last three years:

TAB'E 1  
Expenditure on Documents  
(US dollars)

	<u>1970</u>	<u>1969</u>	<u>1968</u>
HQ and Geneva	23,504,600	21,837,400	18,925,700
Regional Commissions, UNCTAD, UNIDO	5,968,300	5,364,100	4,939,400
Special Conferences and Meetings	2,091,000	1,681,484	2,234,626
Official Records	1,384,740	1,108,467	1,065,914
Total (Gross)	32,948,640	29,991,451	27,165,640
Less Staff Assessment	3,660,800	3,448,900	2,878,000
Total (Net)	<u>29,287,840</u>	<u>26,542,551</u>	<u>24,287,640</u>

16. The figures given above include certain expenses, such as interpretation, not directly related to documentation. On the other hand, they do not include authors' costs and other services rendered by substantive units in the preparation of documents.

17. Furthermore, the figures do not include documentation for certain seminars which are financed by the host country, nor documents issued by the Centre for Economic and Social Information (CESI) which are financed from a special trust fund. There are doubtless other sources for the financing of documents which were not detected by the Inspectors.

18. In their earlier report the Inspectors had already emphasized the importance of assessing authors' costs, since without them all the financial implications prepared by the Secretariat for the various United Nations bodies relating to documentation are bound to be unrealistic.

19. In his comments on the Inspectors' report (A/C.5/1247), however, the Secretary-General suggested that "the calculation of authors' costs with any degree of precision required the institution of time-and-work records for the professional and ancillary staff engaged in the drafting of documents". He wondered "whether the benefits expected to accrue from the availability of this information are commensurate with the effort, energy and time which will have to be devoted to the maintenance of such (time-and-work) records".

20. Nevertheless even an approximate estimate of authors' costs remains, in the Inspectors' opinion, essential. Again, they have attempted to make a calculation of their own and, using two different approaches, have arrived at the following virtually identical results:

	\$
(a) Salary P.5 step 3, including common staff costs	25,000 gross
Less staff assessment	6,000
	<u>19,000 net</u>
(b) Total cost of professional posts for 1970	44,717,210 gross
Total professional posts for 1970	2,382
Average cost per post	18,800 gross
Since the deduction for staff assessment and the addition for common staff costs are virtually the same one arrives at	<u>18,800 net</u>

21. Taking as the average net annual salary the first figure of \$19,000,<sup>1/</sup> one obtains for the time spent in 1970 on a document the following:

	\$
- 1 month	1,600
- 1 week	400
- 1 working day	80
- 1 hour	10

22. Thus, if a staff member takes a month to draft a forty-page document, the author's costs would amount to about \$1,600, that is to say, about \$40 per page,<sup>2/</sup> which, to obtain the total cost of the document, must be added to the cost of

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<sup>1/</sup> In his Programme and Budget proposals for 1972-73 the Director-General of ILO uses \$19,500 as the "standard cost figure" for professional posts.

<sup>2/</sup> The example used here is a very conservative one, seeing that it covers the work of one staff member only in drafting a document. It does not provide for the cost of preliminary research nor of discussion and revision of the draft, all of which may be performed by several persons and is thus both time-consuming and expensive. If such factors as these were taken into account, it is probable that "authors' costs" would be at least double the figure given above.

translation, typing and editing. In paragraph 24 of document A/INF/124 the figure given for the latter (minus editing) was \$90 per page for four languages. As this figure is three years old, it is probable that it is now somewhat over \$100 per page.

23. The total costs of such a document drafted in the Secretariat and issued in four languages was in 1970, therefore, at least \$140 per page. This, naturally, is an average figure intended as an ordre de grandeur; the actual figure will vary from document to document according to its nature. For instance, a highly technical study will take longer to draft and translate than a non-technical one; a document full of statistical tables will take longer to type than one which is mainly narrative. Moreover this cost figure relates only to the production cycle of the document. To obtain the actual cost, one would doubtless have to include the reproduction and distribution cycle.<sup>3/</sup>

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3/ As with everything pertaining to the actual cost of United Nations documentation, it is far from easy to ascertain what the cost of the reproduction cycle is. The Budget Estimates for 1970 (A/7606, Section 11, Chapter 8, paragraph 11.32) and the ACABQ report on General Co-ordination (A/8158, Table I, page 19) give for the reproduction of 1 million page-units at Headquarters in 1969 an average cost figure of \$3,500 for labour and \$1,000 for supplies. In 1970 the cost of labour had dropped to \$3,021. For Geneva, however, three conflicting sets of figures exist: the ACABQ, in its above-mentioned report, gives for 1969 a total cost figure of \$7,200 for 1 million page-units. The Budget Estimates for 1971 (A/8006, Section 15.84, Table 15-30) name a figure of \$5,200, of which \$3,500 for labour and \$1,700 for supplies. Lastly, the Documents Division at the Geneva Office gives for 1970 yet a third figure, \$3,609, of which \$2,364 for labour and \$1,245 for supplies. The cost figures for distribution are even more difficult to ascertain. In Geneva outside users of the Palais are charged roughly \$3,700 per 1 million page-units (Administrative and Financial Instructions No. 18, Rev.8, dated 30 June 1969). The Inspectors have been given no figures for the cost at Headquarters.

PART A: DOCUMENTATION

I. The Problem

24. The problem of documentation in the United Nations is virtually as old as the Organization itself. Indeed it has been described so many times and so well that the Inspectors feel that it would be contrary to the purpose of this report to attempt to restate it in detail.

25. They will confine themselves, therefore, to noting that in 1970 the organization reproduced (in all languages) more than 867, 800 pages of documentation, making up a total volume of 773,086,990 page-units, at a total cost of some \$29 million. This means that during the year 1970 each Member State had in principle to "digest" something like 600 pages a day, Saturdays and Sundays included. It also means that the upward trend which, as Table 2 on the following page shows, had been briefly arrested in 1968 in terms of pages and in 1969 also in terms of page-units, has now resumed. For its part, the cost of this documentation has increased since 1968 at a yearly average of 10 per cent.<sup>4/</sup>

26. Already in 1965 the ACABQ found that the situation had "deteriorated over the past seven years" (A/6307). By 1968 it had, in the words of the Committee on Conferences "assumed critical proportions" (A/7361). Moreover, as the ACABQ pointed out in 1965 and 1967 (A/6307 and A/6707), the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts to examine the Finances of the United Nations and Specialized Agencies in 1965 (A/6343) and the President of the Economic and Social Council in 1968 (A/7203), the very usefulness of this documentation was jeopardized, since most governments could not read and digest more than a very small proportion of what they received and were finding it increasingly difficult to co-ordinate the views of interested departments and brief their representatives for a meaningful participation in the discussions.

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<sup>4/</sup> Report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly (1970) (A/8001) and internal statistics of OCS (New York) and of Conference Division (Geneva).

TABLE 2Volume and Cost  
of United Nations Documentation

	<u>1970</u>	<u>1969</u>	<u>1968</u>	<u>1967</u>
<u>VOLUME: 5/ 8/</u>				
<u>Total reproduced internally</u> (mimeo and offset)(all languages)				
Pages	867,806	824,170	803,585	808,847
(%) <u>6/</u>	(+5%)	(+3%)	(-1%)	
Page Units	773,086,990	723,713,064	739,507,676	828,162,490
(%)	(+7%)	(-2%)	(-11%)	
<u>COST 7/ 9/</u>				
(US dollars)	29,287,840	26,542,551	24,287,640	Not available
(%)	(+10%)	(+9%)		

5/ Broken down between Headquarters and Geneva, the figures are as follows:

ReproductionPages:

New York	499,141	470,234	465,117	451,847
(%)	(+6%)	(+1%)	(+3%)	
Geneva	368,664	353,936	338,468	357,000
(%)	(+4%)	(+4.6%)	(- 5.2%)	

Page Units

New York	547,899,325	511,984,064	525,823,676	594,666,490
(%)	(+7%)	(-3%)	(-11.5%)	
Geneva	225,101,000	211,729,000	213,684,000	233,496,000
(%)	(+6.3%)	(-1%)	(-8.5%)	

6/ Throughout this report the percentage increases and decreases are calculated against the preceding year.

7/ If authors' costs (see paragraph 14-23) were included, these figures would have to be increased substantially.

Sources:

8/ S.G. Report (1970)(A/8001). Headquarters: OCS, Editorial and Official Records Services, Documents Control, Internal statistics. Geneva Office: Conference Division, Documents Control Section, Internal statistics.

9/ A/7006, A/7606.

27. In an organization whose principal function is to provide a forum in which all Member States, large and small, can freely express their opinions and exchange views on world problems, the spoken and the printed word are basic to the whole range of its activities.

28. In the light of the figures given above, however, the Inspectors do not hesitate to say that the point of saturation has now been reached and indeed overstepped and that the law of diminishing returns is taking over. As a former President of the General Assembly Mr. Lester B. Pearson has said: "The UN is drowning in its own words and suffocating in its own documentation".

29. Beyond strictly financial considerations, therefore, (though they can hardly be disregarded) the future usefulness of the Organization may well hinge on its ability and determination to set once and for all and strictly enforce a reasonable but drastically reduced ceiling to the volume of documentation its various bodies call for and its services produce.

## II. Previous Attempts at Rationalization

30. The General Assembly's first call for restraint on the subject of documentation (resolution 593 (VI)) goes back to 1952. Since then, both the General Assembly (resolutions 789 (VIII), 1203 (XII), 1272 (XIII), 2247 (XXI), 2292 (XXII), 2538 (XXIV) and, lastly, 2732 (XXV)) and the Economic and Social Council (resolutions 1090 E (XXXIX), 1154 (XLI), 1264 (XLIH), 1379 (XLV) and its decision of 31 July 1970 (XLIX)) have sought to admonish and instruct Member States and Secretariat alike in the exercise of such restraint. The situation has also been reviewed by the Committee on the Control and Limitation of Documentation in 1958 (A/3888), an AMS consultant in 1965, the Committee on Conferences (A/7361) 1968, the Joint Inspection Unit in 1968 (A/7576) and 1969 (JIU/REP/69/10) and the Committee on the Reorganization of the Secretariat (A/7359) in 1968, as well as by the ACABQ (A/7400) in 1968, (A/7789) in 1969 and (A/8212) in 1970, and finally by the Secretary-General himself in 1967 (A/6675), 1969 (A/7579, A/C.5/1247 and A/C.5/1257) and 1970 (A/CN.1/L.7, A/8126).

31. The effects of all these endeavours are meagre, to say the least, primarily because, as will be seen from the examples analyzed in this report, most of the past decisions of the Assembly and Council still go unheeded, both by the Secretariat and by the Member States themselves. Indeed the only real success goes back to 1958 when, thanks to the joint efforts of the Committee on the Control and Limitation of Documentation and the Secretariat, some reduction was achieved. Unfortunately these efforts were not sustained and the upward trend resumed. In recent years the only achievements worth recording were: (i) a fairly substantial drop in the volume of General Assembly documentation (15 per cent less in 1970 than in 1969, 12 per cent less than in 1967); (ii) economies of the order of \$130,000 in the area of Official Records; (iii) a substantial cut in the documentation of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment; and (iv) one of \$9,500 in UNCTAD publications.

32. In its last report on the subject (A/8212) the ACABQ points out that "the wishes expressed by the General Assembly last year in resolution 2538 (XXIV) have, all too often, not been heeded by other organs", and that the "increasing awareness" of Member States of the seriousness of the problem "has not prevented the submission of a number of proposals for the creation of additional bodies", with the

consequences, regarding documentation, that follow. The ACABQ feels also, however, "that the possibilities for new approaches at the Secretariat level may not have been exhausted" and calls for "imaginative initiatives" in this connexion.

33. In the course of this report the Inspectors will have many occasions to refer to past recommendations of the General Assembly and ECOSOC, as well as to the follow-up action that resulted, or lack of such action. They will, therefore, confine themselves at this stage to endorsing wholeheartedly the remarks of the ACABQ. Indeed their own investigations have shown that if the situation is to be improved at all there is need for far more than "increasing awareness" on the part of Member States and for far more "imaginative initiatives" on the part of the Secretariat than has been the case to date, as there is need, in both cases, for a much more conscientious implementation of the decisions taken to date by the Assembly and the Council.

### III. The Present Situation and its Shortcomings

34. It is against the general background illustrated succinctly by the figures in paragraph 25 and Table 1 above that the Inspectors undertook their study of the documentation of the General Assembly at its twenty-fifth session.

35. The agenda of the twenty-fifth session consisted of 101 items (six less than that of the twenty-fourth session), involving the examination of 14,082 document pages<sup>10/</sup> (excluding records). This represented a decrease of 15 per cent compared to the preceding session. Nevertheless each delegation had still, in principle, to "digest" 167 pages daily. Moreover even this figure does not give the full picture since in addition to the A/... and A/C... series (both "General" and "Limited"), the Assembly had as usual to examine documents carrying other (E/..., etc.) symbols which are not included in these statistics.

TABLE 3				
Volume of General Assembly Documentation <sup>11/ 12/</sup>				
	<u>Twenty-fifth</u> <u>session</u> (1970)	<u>Twenty-fourth</u> <u>session</u> (1969)	<u>Twenty-third</u> <u>session</u> (1968)	<u>Twenty-second</u> <u>session</u> (1967)
<u>Duration of</u> <u>session</u> (days)	84	93	88	91
<u>Number of items</u> <u>on agenda</u>	101	107	98	99
<u>Document pages</u> (%)	14,082 (-14%)	16,386 (-1%)	16,492 (+4%)	15,851
<u>Pages to be</u> <u>"digested" daily</u> (%)	167 (-5%)	176 (-6%)	187 (+17%)	160

<sup>10/</sup> Wherever mentioned in this report, the expression "document pages" or "pages" means pages in the original language; that of "page-units" the overall number of pages reproduced in all four languages.

<sup>11/</sup> A/... and A/C... documents only.

<sup>12/</sup> Sources: United Nations Journal; statistics of Documents Control at Headquarters.

36. A sample analysis of various categories of documentation, as well as the enquiries they made and talks they had with many delegations and members of the Secretariat, enabled the Inspectors to identify certain defects, many of them long-standing, which, if corrected, would result in a substantial reduction in the volume of documentation, in a more effective use of time during the sessions of the General Assembly and in significant financial savings.

37. They are strengthened in this belief when they note that several other organizations of the United Nations system have had to face this problem too, and have tackled it more energetically and achieved results that are more impressive than is the case with the United Nations. Where appropriate, therefore, the Inspectors will draw on the experience of these organizations in the hope that the successes scored elsewhere may serve as an additional incentive for action in the United Nations, which produces the greatest volume of documentation of them all.

38. The shortcomings noted by the Inspectors fall broadly into the following categories:

- (a) Lack of effective documents control;
- (b) Disregard of earlier decisions of the General Assembly;
- (c) Editing problems;
- (d) Documents which appear to be wholly or in part unnecessary;
- (e) Documents which are issued too late for serious consideration;
- (f) Multiple documentation originating from bodies with overlapping mandates;
- (g) Documents which are issued at too frequent intervals;
- (h) Unnecessary translation of documents;
- (i) Unnecessarily wide distribution of certain documents.

39. Each of the foregoing is dealt with, and illustrated by examples, in the sections which follow.

(a) Lack of Effective Documents Control

40. The Inspectors believe that the primary cause of many of the problems of United Nations documentation is the absence to this day of an effective system of control.

41. Though there exist within the Secretariat three units whose job it is, at least in theory, to exercise such control, viz. the Secretary-General's Office (in the case of all General Assembly documents), the Editing Section of ESA (for the documents produced in that Department) and the Editorial Control Section of OCS (for all the

rest), as well as a fourth, the Documents Control section of OCS, to supervise their technical processing, the word "control" in all four cases is a misnomer, since none of them has the authority or the machinery to do, nor, in effect do they do what the Inspectors understand by the word "control", i.e. control over the number, volume and content of documents. Nor does there exist even an effective system of priorities. "Control", as now practised in the United Nations is based on the capacity of the servicing departments and consists by and large of channelling requests through to the point of issuance until such time as the resources - themselves unidentifiable - run out, after which the documents are simply added to the ever-increasing backlog.

42. Accordingly, the progress of a typical document from its inception to its re-emergence at an Assembly session is now roughly as follows (see also Annex I):

43. At the beginning of each year the Under-Secretary-General in charge of General Assembly affairs formally advises Department heads of their respective responsibilities in the light of the decisions taken by the last Assembly (following the twenty-fifth session this memorandum went out on 24 February 1971; following the twenty-fourth session, it had gone out on 20 February 1970). The Department head then informs his directors of their responsibilities - unless this was done already, prior to the receipt of the Under-Secretary-General's formal memorandum - and the directors then decide what sort of action is needed (report, study group, etc.).

44. In November/December of each year OCS, for its part, sends out to each Department, as well as to UNDP, UNICEF and UNITAR, requests for estimates of the documentation to be produced by them in the coming year. In April and June of each year revised estimates are called for. Finally, early in the fall it sends out an additional request for advance estimates of the documentation that will be put out during the first three months of the following year.

45. These requests go to all Division directors, who fill out so-called D.9 forms. These are of three types: form "A" relates to documents required for meetings; form "B" to departmental publications and form "C" to miscellaneous documentation not related to meetings. In ESA (the largest producer of documents in the United Nations) all forms are then checked for validity in the light of the approved Calendar of Meetings - the "A" forms by the editors of ESA and the "B" and "C" forms by the Executive Office of the Under-Secretary. The forms then go to Documents Control which

discusses them with the respective Departments with a view to reducing peakloads in the light of available data on the capacity of the various services involved in their processing; if necessary, priorities are re-assigned, temporary assistance is recruited, and outside translation is contracted. The final information is reproduced in the monthly document "Information regarding Documentation". Since the figures are based on guess-work rather than on approved programmes, this information is seldom realistic.

46. What is more serious, however, is that at no point, as yet, have any of the projects in the programmes been checked substantively at the higher level of the competent Department. Until virtually completed, the documents remain the exclusive responsibility of the author-Division concerned.

47. The completed document is then edited, usually in haste since it often reaches the editors behind schedule. It is only at this stage that the content, length and overall format of the document are discussed with the author-Division. Afterwards it is translated and reproduced. The Inspectors were assured that this belated dialogue was "good". There have been cases, however, when the Departments overruled all objections, however well-founded. Indeed the examples that follow show that this dialogue meets, in fact, with only indifferent success, if and when it occurs at all.

48. The technical processing of the document at this second stage (with the exception of the editing element, about which more will be said later) seems to run smoothly enough and, subject to occasional manpower problems, with a minimum of delay, at least at Headquarters.

49. But the substantive control of the document is clearly unsatisfactory. And indeed it could hardly be otherwise. For the decisive element in any such substantive control must surely be the quality of a document and its potential usefulness to delegates, and however competent technically, and experienced in terms of handling specialized subject matter, the capable editors of the Secretariat may be, they are not the persons with whom, and theirs is not the level at which, the documentation programme of a Department or the content, length and format of a document can and indeed should be discussed. This should be done (as already suggested by the Committee on the Reorganization of the Secretariat (A/7359, paragraph 145 (c)) at the highest level of the Department concerned and already during the first stage, before time, human effort and, last but not least, money have been invested in the document.

50. The Inspectors were struck by the fact that although the consequences of this lack of substantive control are there for all to see - and some of them will be

analysed in detail in this report - the Secretariat seems resigned to existing arrangements. True, most past recommendations, including those of the Inspectors' first report, (General Assembly resolutions 593 (VI), 2292 (XXII), 2538 (XXIV), as well as documents A/7359, A/7576, A/7579 and A/7789) aimed essentially at perfecting these existing arrangements by strengthening the hands of OCS. Indeed the outposting of a group of OCS editors to ESA was viewed as a major step in the right direction. After this, their second look at the problem, the Inspectors have come to the conclusion that this is the wrong approach, that the existing system lessens the responsibility of Departments for their own documents and that it is essential that all Departments should accept and exercise full responsibility for the documents prepared by them.

51. For the same reason, the idea of tightening control over the substance of a document through periodic meetings between author-Divisions and representatives of OCS - an idea which was aired in some quarters - seems, likewise, unrealistic, since it stems again from the misconception that OCS is the proper department to exercise substantive control, something the Inspectors doubt.

52. Since the fall of 1970 a new system of substantive documents control by the Department itself has been introduced in ESA, under which all Directors are required to submit to the Under-Secretary by the end of a year certain basic information regarding the reports for which their respective units are responsible. This information, which is designed not only to ensure more realistic estimates of the financial implications of these projects but also to exercise restraining control at the initial stage of a project, i.e. where such control is most needed, will include: (a) the title of the report; (b) the legislative authority; (c) a brief annotated outline of content; (d) anticipated conclusions and recommendations; (e) the target date for completion of the draft; (f) the factors that may affect the time-table for completing the draft (e.g. questionnaires to governments; consultations with other organizations or departments within the Secretariat; prior consideration of the draft by an inter-governmental or expert group); (g) the anticipated length of the report; (h) features that may cause difficulty in translation or reproduction (e.g. highly technical subject matter, tables, diagrams); (i) the name of the Officer responsible for the preparation of the report. On the basis of this information, each project will then be discussed within the Department at the highest level and a closer watch will be kept over its progress until completion.

53. The Inspectors wish to commend this initiative which is long overdue, which corresponds to their own present thinking and which, they hope, will at last introduce some degree of effective control in the Department which accounts for the largest share of United Nations documentation. Indeed they believe that such a system should be introduced in all departments where substantive documents control is still non-existent or slack, including the Geneva Office, the regional economic commissions, UNIDO and UNCTAD. They would suggest, however, that it is hardly possible or indeed desirable to anticipate at the initial stage of a project what its "conclusions and recommendations" (point (d) above) will be. Neither is such information relevant to the problem the system is expected to help solve. On the other hand, this might be the appropriate stage for Department heads to instruct those responsible for a document to implement the decisions of the Assembly and the Council regarding report-summaries and the inclusion of an indication of recommended follow-up action.

54. If the Secretariat's responsibility for the present lack of effective control is undeniable, it is equally clear that Member States must also do their share, inasmuch as it is they who initiate the activities to which most of the documentation relates and who approve their financial implications.

55. The Chairman of the ACABQ, at the twenty-fifth session of the General Assembly, went in considerable detail into the problem of financial implications and the Inspectors endorse his arguments and suggestions (pages 9-10 of document A/C.5/1310). For despite the various existing rules and past recommendations on this subject (resolutions 593 (VI), 1272 (XIII) and 2538 (XXIV) of the General Assembly, and ECOSOC's decision of 31 July 1970 at its forty-ninth session), the information provided by the Secretariat, usually under considerable time pressure, is more often than not unrealistic, and its examination by delegates perfunctory. And yet it is at this stage, before the whole machinery for the initiation and production of a document has been set in motion, that control over the end-product can best be assured.

56. In their first report on documentation (A/7576) the Inspectors suggested certain criteria in this connexion, most of which were endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 2538 (XXIV). The Inspectors understand that the Secretariat has been instructed accordingly, but that some difficulties are being encountered in applying these instructions in practice. They trust that these will be overcome without delay. The Assembly did not, however, endorse one of the Inspectors' suggestions and since their present investigation has shown it to be still fully relevant, they would like to

commend it anew to the Assembly's attention: Secretariat estimates should present a detailed breakdown of the total costs of a document, including author's costs.

57. The responsibility of Member States in helping to control the volume of United Nations documentation could also be usefully exercised in deciding what type of documentation should be provided for the various subsidiary bodies they set up, and in insisting on the strict respect by all these subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly's past decisions on the subject.

58. The documentation of the Human Rights Commission and of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and People<sup>13/</sup> (both of which provide many instances of disregard for these decisions) will be gone into in detail in another section of this report. Suffice it to mention here that the documentation of the six-member Ad Hoc Group set up under resolution 2 (XXIII) of the Human Rights Commission alone accounted in 1969 for 10,749 document pages and 4,996,030 page-units, or 2 per cent and 1 per cent, respectively, of the document pages and page-units produced by the entire Organization. Moreover of the 30,550 pages of PV's produced in 1969 by the Organization 927 (i.e. 3 per cent) were produced by the Ad Hoc Group.

59. Since 1968 each United Nations body is provided at the start of a session with a document which states briefly present policies as regards documentation. Two such documents have appeared to date: A/INF/124 and its up-dated version, A/INF/136. The Inspectors commend this initiative which followed directly from General Assembly resolution 2292 (XXII). They note, however, that A/INF/136 does not contain information on the cost of producing documents (as requested in paragraph 2 (a) of the above resolution). Moreover its form is descriptive, rather than exhortative and action-oriented. Finally, for reasons of economy, the document is not distributed to delegates but only referred to by the Chairman and then held at their disposal in the meeting room. As a result, it is by and large ignored.

60. The Inspectors would suggest that the Chairman should not only refer to it, but that he should summarize its contents, dwelling especially on the cost figures, to which could also be added information on the volume of documentation produced by the Organization in the past year (see Part "B", recommendation 12 (a)).

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<sup>13/</sup> This Committee is commonly known, and will hereinafter be referred to in this report as the "Special Committee of Twenty-Four".

(b) Disregard of Earlier Decisions of the General Assembly

61. In 1958 the Committee on the Control of Documentation examined in detail the question of the drafting of documents and made in paragraph 27 (a) and (g) of its report (A/3888) a number of concrete suggestions, which were endorsed that same year by the General Assembly in Resolution 1272 (XIII). It was only in 1969, however, that the Secretariat issued a new Administrative Instruction (ST/AI/189) to replace the one in force (ST/AFS/AI/99), which dated back to 1953. Therein staff were merely required "to draft reports in a spirit of economy and in accordance with editorial instructions and directives for the control and limitation of documentation".

62. The relevant criteria suggested by the Committee on the Control of Documentation and endorsed by the Assembly were the following:

- 27. (a) (i) The achievement of the maximum degree of conciseness by careful drafting and editing and by the elimination of superfluous or repetitious material;
  - (ii) Where possible, the omission of background information and the substitution of references to documents already produced on the subject;
  - (iii) The desirability, in the case of progressive reporting on specific studies, of casting reports in the form of addenda limited to new information.
- 27. (g) (i) Introductions containing background information should, as far as possible, be confined to matters of substance rather than procedure and contain only what it is essential to bring to the notice of the body to which the report is submitted;
  - (ii) Reports should become more and more concise as questions progress upwards from bodies of less to bodies of greater authority;
  - (iii) Texts should not be annexed when their substance can reasonably be incorporated in the main body of the report. When feasible, cross-references to easily accessible documents should be used;
  - (iv) The distinction between records of meetings and reports on the consideration of agenda items should be preserved.

63. The examples that follow show that these Assembly decisions are by and large ignored, in some cases at the insistence of the Assembly's own subsidiary bodies, in others because of a lack of initiative on the part of the Secretariat.

64. The Third Committee depends in its work to a major extent on that of the Human Rights Commission and the latter's work programme is complicated and its volume of documentation huge.

65. For although the Commission's agenda is as a rule far above its capacity to deal with during its five-week sessions, documentation is produced for all items on the agenda, those documents which cannot be considered at one session being reproduced in revised form for the next. Moreover the timing of the Commission's sessions (in February of each year) in relation to the General Assembly sessions is such that much of this documentation is submitted in a rush in a manner which makes effective editing difficult.

66. The excessive volume of the Commission's documentation is due, partly, to the practice it has adopted for the study of the periodic reports it receives from Member States. First, these reports are produced in extenso; then the Secretariat issues an analysis and also a subject and country index, after which the reports are studied by an Ad Hoc Committee, which puts out some general remarks of its own, together with a draft resolution. All these documents are called for under various relevant ECOSOC resolutions. Under this pattern the following documents were submitted to the Commission on Human Rights at its twenty-sixth session:

<u>Symbol</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Number of pages</u>	<u>Languages</u>	<u>Page- units</u>
E/CN.4/907 Rev.6	Periodic reports on human rights - Status of multilateral treaties ... (memorandum by the Secretary-General)	5	4	17,000
E/CN.4/973 Add.15-18	Periodic reports on human rights - Reports on civil and political rights (notes by the Secretary-General)	43	4	146,200
E/CN.4/1011 and Add.1-10	Periodic reports on human rights - Reports on economic, social and cultural rights ... (comments from governments)	398	4	1,353,200
E/CN.4/1012 and Add.1	Periodic reports on human rights - Reports on economic, social and cultural rights ... (comments from Specialized Agencies)	143	4	486,200
E/CN.4/1024 and Add.1-2	Periodic reports on human rights - Analytical summary ... (1 July 1966 to 30 June 1969)	104	4	353,600
E/CN.4/1025	Periodic reports on human rights - Subject and country index ...	23	4	78,200
E/CN.4/1026	Report of the <u>Ad Hoc</u> Committee on Periodic Reports	18	4	61,200
TOTAL		734		2,495,600

67. We see, however, from paragraph 26 of the Ad Hoc Committee's report (E/CN.4/1026, dated 13 March 1970) that even the documents listed above "accounted for barely 25 per cent of the total membership of the United Nations". The potential volume of documentation in this category is consequently even more considerable.

68. And then, apart from the question of volume, there is some duplication between the periodic reports submitted by governments and their contribution to the United Nations Yearbook on Human Rights.

69. The Inspectors believe that a substantial reduction can be made in this area. They suggest, for instance, that the full periodic reports (which are merely background documents) should be reproduced as conference-room papers (CRP's) in the original language only, it being understood that the analytical summary would continue to be issued in the "General" series in four languages, as at present. Consideration might also be given to dispensing with the subject and country index.

70. The Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities has, for its part, a very ponderous method of preparing studies. It appoints Special Rapporteurs from among its members, who present in successive years a progress report (which may run from a dozen to a hundred or more pages), one or more interim and/or draft reports (several hundred pages long and containing increasingly large versions of the study) and a final report, which after further amendment by the Sub-Commission is then referred to the Commission and issued as a publication.

71. The following studies were under preparation during the twenty-sixth session of the Commission on Human Rights:

<u>Title</u>	<u>Symbol</u>	<u>Number of pages</u>	<u>Languages</u>	<u>Page- units</u>
<u>Study of equality in the administration of justice</u>				
Conference-room papers (describing situation in individual countries)	1-87 and Add.		Original only	
Preliminary report (1963)	E/CN.4/Sub.2/237	34	4	115,940
Progress reports (1964)	E/CN.4/Sub.2/246	14	4	47,740
(1965)	E/CN.4/Sub.2/253	13	4	44,330
(1966)	E/CN.4/Sub.2/266	18	4	61,380
Outline draft report (1967)	E/CN.4/Sub.2/281	47	4	160,270
Draft report (1969)	E/CN.4/Sub.2/289	189	4	644,490
Final report (1969)	E/CN.4/Sub.2/296	267	4	910,470
	Total	582		1,984,620

Printed report (to be issued when approved by  
Commission of Human Rights and Economic and Social Council)

Special study of racial discrimination in the  
political, economic, social and cultural spheres

Conference-room papers (describing situation in individual countries)	1-83		Original only	
Progress report (1967)	E/CN.4/Sub.2/276	186	4	634,260
Draft report (1968)	E/CN.4/Sub.2/288	245	4	835,450
Interim report (1969)	E/CN.4/Sub.2/301	296	4	1,009,360
Final report (1970)	E/CN.4/Sub.2/307 and Add.1-5	337	4	1,149,170
	Total	1,064		3,628,240

Printed report (to be issued at a cost of  
\$15,000, under a General Assembly resolution)

72. As we see, all the documentation prepared at the various stages of the studies, excepting the CRP's, is issued in four languages in the "General" series. The Inspectors suggest that consideration be given to dispensing with the general distribution of everything that is now issued prior to the draft report.

73. Under an ECOSOC resolution the Secretariat used to produce for the Commission on Human Rights a compilation of decisions taken by all United Nations bodies concerning discrimination (E/CN.4/923/Add.2). Despite suggestions to the Commission that repeated revisions of the document were unwarranted, these continued to be issued until the last, twenty-sixth session, when the Secretariat put out merely a list of such decisions instead.

74. In general, much documentation in the human rights field results from questionnaires addressed to governments and their replies thereto, which are often very lengthy. For example, a document containing replies on the education of youth in respect for human rights (E/CN.4/1032 and Add.1 and 2) amounted to some 200 pages, including material not directly relevant to the questionnaire; it received only perfunctory attention in the Commission on Human Rights. The amount of irrelevant material in this document seems to add weight to the Inspectors' suggestion that the replies of governments should be issued as CRP's in the original language only and that an analytical summary of the replies, prepared by the Secretariat and issued in all working languages, is a far more effective working document for the Commission (and its sub-organs where appropriate) than these originals.

75. The fifty-four page addendum to the report of the Special Committee on Apartheid (A/8022/Add.1), headed "Review of Developments in South Africa since 7 October 1969", need not, in the Inspectors' opinion, have been annexed to the report of the Special Committee at all, since it represents merely the "raw material" which helps the Committee in its work. Yet this material will have been issued altogether three times in four languages: (i) as document S/9939/Add.1 (247,590 page-units); (ii) as the annex to the Committee's report (291,600 page-units); and (iii) as part of Supplement No. 22 of the Official Records (A/8022/Rev.1) (268,650 page-units) or a total of 162 pages and 807,840 page-units.

76. The report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of the Sea-Bed and Ocean Floor beyond the Limits of National Jurisdiction to the Twenty-fifth session of the General Assembly (A/8021 - Supplement 21) was 194 pages long. Of these, only twenty-four pages constituted the report of the Committee proper, plus one four-page Annex with the list

of documents of the Committee. The remainder was made up of seven other Annexes; (i) the reports of the two Sub-Committees of the Committee (eleven and twenty-three pages, respectively); (ii) a report of the Secretary-General (sixty-two pages); (iii) a note from the Secretariat (five pages); and (iv) three proposals from Member States (forty-six, seven and five pages, respectively). Each of these seven Annexes had already been issued once before in the "General" series under the A/AC.138/... symbol in four languages and as such, figures in the list of documents of the Committee in Annex VIII.

77. The Special Committee of Twenty-four accounts for the bulk of the documentation of the Fourth Committee (at the twenty-fifth session: 1,100 pages out of 1,539, i.e. 71 per cent). As is pointed out elsewhere in this report, only 17 per cent of its documents were available when the Fourth Committee started its work. Moreover in terms of length, repetition and multiple reproduction in one form or another of virtually identical texts, this documentation has few rivals.

78. The main report of the Special Committee to the twenty-fifth session of the General Assembly (A/8023 and Adds. 1 to 8) was 998 pages long. As with earlier versions, it consisted of four categories of material, grouped in twenty-one chapters and seventeen individual documents: (a) an account of the work of, and action taken by the Committee and its seven subsidiary bodies, i.e. the Working Group, Sub-Committee 1, 2 and 3, and the Sub-Committees on Petitions, on Fiji and on Oman (Chapter I: seventy-nine pages); (b) reports by the Committee on certain specific topics: "Military Activities, etc." (Chapter II: forty-three pages); "Questions of sending Visiting Missions to Territories" (Chapter III, four pages); and "Implementation of the Declaration by the Specialized Agencies, etc." (Chapter IV: sixty-eight pages); and lastly (c) additional reports by the Special Committee - on individual territories (Chapters V through XX included: 787 pages) and on "Information from non-self-governing territories, etc." (Chapter XXI, eight pages). Annexed to the report were: (i) a second report of one of the Sub-Committees on its work in the past year (Annex I: three pages); (ii) a report from the Working Group on a subject that had already been dealt with in the main body of the Committee's report (Annex II: two pages); (iii) a letter from a Member State (Annex III: one page); and (iv) the list of representatives on the Committee (Annex V: four pages); as well as two appendices: (v) an excerpt from a resolution of the OAU (one page); and (vi) a report of OPI on its activities in the field of decolonization (six pages).

79. The Inspectors were struck by the fact that in 1970, as in earlier years, only some 15 per cent of this material, or roughly 150 pages, represented reports in the accepted sense of the term, i.e. accounts of the actual work of the Special Committee and its subsidiary bodies (consideration of past, present and future work, conclusions, recommendations, resolutions, etc.). And yet that is what the General Assembly requires and indeed expects of its subsidiary bodies so that it may, within the relatively short time at its disposal, assess their work and take whatever action may be called for.

80. The remaining 85 per cent, or roughly 850 pages, was made up of material that again can best be described as "raw", which a subsidiary body requires for its work, but which the parent body has more often than not neither the time nor the inclination to study. In the case with which we are concerned this background material was constituted for the greater part by more or less bulky working papers on specific topics or specific territories, varying in length from fifteen or so pages to well over a hundred, prepared by the Secretariat, in which only a few pages were devoted to past action taken by the Special Committee and/or the General Assembly, the rest being annually updated substantive information on political, economic, social and cultural conditions in the various territories or on specific situations there.

81. These working papers will have been issued in 1970 three times: (i) in the A/AC.109/... or A/AC.109/L... series (2,720,000 or 2,401,250 page-units respectively); (ii) as Annexes to the Special Committee's report (A/8023/Add.1 to 8) (4,590,000 page-units); and in Supplement No. 23 of the Official Records (4,037,500 page units), making up a total of 2,550 pages and at least 11,028,750 page-units. Moreover, since much of the economic data in these working papers was incorporated in the Special Committee's separate report on "Activities of foreign economic and other interests, etc.", that material will have been issued twice again, once as A/8148 and Add.1 and later as Supplement No. 23A, with an additional run of 5,400 and 4,750 page-units per page of text each.

82. The documentation pattern of the Special Committee is thus, an example of the "reversed pyramid" against which the Committee on the Control of Documentation warned already in 1958 in its recommendation 27 (g) (ii) (A/3888): instead of becoming shorter and more succinct as it should, a report becomes on the contrary, longer and bulkier as it progresses from the lower rungs of the system to the parent body, in this case the General Assembly.

83. The Inspectors are under the impression that this cumulative pattern results to some extent from a propensity on the part of the Secretariat to follow unquestioningly past models. On the other hand, they are also aware that in some cases it is justified by the purported desire of certain subsidiary bodies that their respective dossiers to the Assembly be as "complete" as possible. As late as 17 September 1970, for instance, the Working Group of the Special Committee of Twenty-four rejected the timid suggestions of OCS to rationalize the Committee's documentation by arguing that these suggestions "would not lead to an appreciable reduction in the volume of documentation ... would deprive members of the Fourth Committee of useful reference material, in appropriately abridged form, which was not readily available or accessible elsewhere" and indeed "would be a source of considerable inconvenience to members of the Fourth Committee" (paragraphs 6 and 7 of document A/AC.109/L.665). The Working Group's stand was endorsed by the Special Committee itself at its 764th meeting, on 18 September 1970 (A/AC.109/PV.764).

84. This decision calls for re-consideration. For apart from the fact that such arguments could be invoked with equal justification by virtually any body within the United Nations system and if endorsed, would make it impossible to cut down the documentation of the United Nations, they are, under the circumstances counter-productive.

85. As mentioned elsewhere, the greater portion of the Special Committee's documentation reached the Assembly too late to be seriously considered by delegations and sometimes too late to be even skimmed through before decisions on the items the documents related to were taken. Indeed their volume, format and repetitive contents are in themselves a discouragement to serious study.

86. Quite apart from the fact, therefore, that the present situation runs counter to the General Assembly's insistent recommendations on the subject of United Nations documentation and that were it to continue, the Committees which are provided with this type of cumulative documentation would find themselves (as compared to other subsidiary bodies of the Assembly) in a position of unenviable privilege to which they surely do not aspire, the Inspectors feel strongly that unessential and excessive documentation of the kind referred to in the preceding paragraphs is a great burden on the organization's time and resources. They feel that the documentation of the Special Committee could be rationalized and reduced by at least 50 per cent without detriment to the Committee's effectiveness. Indeed, if there is a reduction in the volume of

documentation and the documents are received in time by members of the Committee, the highly important problems which they are called upon to tackle would receive greater attention and their difficult tasks and objectives would be more likely to be fulfilled. 87. The Inspectors consider that a thorough review and rationalization of the documentation of all bodies, whose reports follow this cumulative pattern, is imperative.

To this end, the Inspectors suggest that:

1. As a matter of principle, no previously issued material (be it records, petitions or Secretariat working papers) should be incorporated or appended to Committee reports in any form whatsoever, being, where necessary, merely referred to;
2. Such reports should consist exclusively (as is the case with the present Chapter I of the Special Committee's report) of an account of the body's own work, and of that of its subsidiary bodies; of any proposals made for decision by the General Assembly; of its future programme and of a list of its membership. It should include no extraneous material (whether this be delegation letters, decisions by other bodies or the like). Moreover those sections which deal with its examination of the various topics should cease to mention this or that statement by a delegate (since the records of Committees are circulated in the "General" series anyway), unless the reproduction of such statements has been formally requested and authorized in the light of the financial implications involved;
3. Secretariat working papers (for example, the present "Annexes" which represent the bulk of the Special Committee's reports) should be issued once in the "General" instead of the "Limited" series, and then merely referred to in the Committee reports, it being understood that they should not become a part of the report and thus not go into the Official Records.
4. As for the content of these working papers:
  - (i) the sections headed, for example, "Action previously taken by the ..... Committee and the General Assembly", instead of tracing the history of the item since the beginning, should be limited to decisions taken in the previous year;

(ii) the information contained in the other sections should be limited to that which has become available since the publication of the previous working paper. Basic information (size, geographic location, etc.) should not be included more than once.

5. No petition should be issued singly. All petitions should be grouped and issued once only in the "General" series. None of them should be reproduced, even as excerpts, in any of the reports.

88. The Secretary-General's annual report (in 1970, document A/8001) is undoubtedly one of the most important documents before the General Assembly, but it, too, contains a large amount of material which has simply been excised more or less verbatim from such other documents as the reports of the Security, Trusteeship and Economic and Social Councils, the International Law Commission, etc.<sup>14/</sup> In other cases, the Secretary-General's report, while covering the same ground, gives either a less satisfactory description than do the other reports (for instance, page 112 of A/8001 and page 48 of A/8003), or else it omits vital information (for instance it does not mention the February-March session of the Human Rights Commission on page 106 of A/8001, as compared to page 48 of A/8003). On the other hand, in at least one case (the Belgrade seminar on the Role of Youth in June) the Secretary-General's report provided the information which the report of ECOSOC had omitted (pages 114-115 of A/8001 and page 52 of A/8003).

89. Rule 48, which requires that the Secretary-General "shall make an annual report . . . to the General Assembly on the work of the Organization" does not specify the nature of this report. As presently drafted, it is not only long but is getting longer every year (from 103 pages in 1959/1960 to 255 pages in 1970, not counting the Introductory part, which itself has increased from eight pages to twenty-two). By merely projecting its present growth-rate over the next ten years, there is no reason why the 1980 version should not be 630 pages long, plus 60 pages of Introduction!

90. In 1958 the Committee on the Control of Documentation (A/3888) had felt that the Secretary-General's report was one of those documents "in regard to which great care should be taken not to reduce them in any way that would impair their usefulness".

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<sup>14/</sup> For instance, pages 108-109, 114, 50-51, 105, 110-111, 115, 120, and paragraphs 5-6 of page 137 of document A/8001, as compared (respectively) to pages 46-47, 51, 113, 46, 97-98, 52-53, 56, and paragraphs 73-74 of page 12 of document A/8003

For the same reason the Inspectors hesitate to make any suggestions regarding its content and length, but the few examples listed above would seem to indicate that here, too, there is room for improvement - indeed they believe that the purpose of this report might be adequately served if it were based on what is now in the Introduction, with such elaboration and references to other documents as are necessary.

91. The Inspectors tread, no doubt, familiar ground when they suggest that the report of the Economic and Social Council is one of the least satisfactory documents of the Organization.

92. This report, as originally designed, was to serve three distinct purposes:

(i) present a record of the Council's work; (ii) inform the General Assembly and provide it with a framework for further discussion; and (iii) acquaint the general public with the work of the Council. At the moment, despite its length (the most recent version, A/8003, had 118 double-column pages and fifteen pages of front-matter), it is neither a comprehensive account of the work being done in the economic, social and human rights fields; nor is it a useful action-oriented report for the Assembly; and, lastly, there is no evidence that the public makes any use of it. A lot of space is given to "background" (usually by summarizing the reports of subsidiary bodies, most of which are available anyway) and to the paraphrasing of resolutions (which are reprinted) and very little attention is given to the Council's proceedings (which delegations spoke, what they spoke on, what the process of adoption of decisions was, etc.). Lastly, no guidance is given to the Assembly on the action it should take (if any), beyond a few footnotes which are liable to escape the notice of all but the most inquisitive readers.

93. Admittedly, the Council's activities cover a vast ground; moreover the report is not submitted to the Council for approval prior to issuance, so that its drafting presents many problems. Nevertheless, were this report to be restructured along the lines of the reports of the Council's own subsidiary bodies, and the material it contains more carefully selected and edited, it would become not only a more useful working document for delegates, but could probably be cut by at least one third. The Inspectors are aware that suggestions for the re-structuring of the report along these lines have been made in the course of informal discussions about the improvement of the Council's work.

94. Many of the reports and recommendations of the ACABQ start out with extensive verbatim quotations from resolutions, from the Secretary-General's reports, or from those of reviewing bodies. Since, as a rule, the reports of the ACABQ are examined in

conjunction with the latter, the Inspectors wonder whether here, too, the General Assembly's decisions could not be more faithfully observed, and such quotations omitted or reduced to the bare minimum.

95. In the absence of agreed presentation standards in the Organization there continues to be considerable variety both in the format and the presentation of many of these documents.

96. The Inspectors noted, for instance, that despite a clearcut editorial directive (ST/CS/SER.A/9) issued on 15 September 1970 by the Editorial Control Section of OCS at the request of the Chief Editor, which provides a standard format for the reports of the Main Committees to the General Assembly on the following lines:

- (1) Item on agenda discussed;
- (2) The background material and documentation before the Committee;
- (3) Past decisions (if any) of the Committee or of a higher body;
- (4) Brief description of the discussion (not saying who said what but what main issues or points of view emerged, whether embodied in draft resolutions or not) and the decision of the Committee;
- (5) Recommendation to the General Assembly.

there were at the twenty-fifth session considerable discrepancies between the various reports. In some cases the guidelines contained in the Directive were completely disregarded, with the result that some were lengthy and diffuse while others were brief and to the point. Examples of the former were the reports of the Third and Sixth Committees and of the latter the reports of the First, Special Political, Second and Fourth Committees.

97. The reports of the Third and Sixth Committees gave a considerable amount of historical background, quoted in full draft resolutions proposed and gave an over-generous summary of the debate in the Committees. Reports of the Fifth Committee were also unduly generous with respect to historical background and they too gave a summary of the debate in the Committee, though the latter was usually concise. The other Committees gave no summary of the debate at all; instead they simply referred to the numbers and dates of the meetings at which the subject dealt with in the report was discussed. With this information it is a simple matter to refer to the records of the relevant meetings for details of the discussion.

98. The Inspectors also noted that whils<sup>t</sup> the Second, Fourth and Fifth Committees all issued their reports first in draft form, the others did not do so.

99. The Inspectors believe that a rationalization of practice with regard to sessional Committee reports is desirable both to facilitate their consideration by the General Assembly and to reduce their overall volume. They hope that in the future the Editorial Directive will be respected, and that if it is not, the Committees themselves will look into the matter.

100. Though the Inspectors lacked the time to go into the subject in detail themselves, they were likewise struck by the great diversity in the structure of the reports of the various subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly generally, which in their opinion is also conducive to unnecessary waste and confusion.

101. In their talks with the Translation Service and the various sections of the Editorial and Official Records Service the Inspectors heard constant complaints about the careless way in which documents prepared by the various substantive Departments continue to be referenced. This appears to be a major cause for the delays to which this report addresses itself in paragraphs 139 to 202.

102. Under existing instructions (see document ST/AI/189, dated 7 November 1969) referencing is likewise, at least in principle, the responsibility of the substantive departments, which transmit their documents for a second going-over to the special Reference Unit, so that in theory the Translation Service should not have to do any reference work at all. Indeed, when there is time poorly referenced material is now sent back to the Departments. In practice, however, owing to the shortness of time, documents still go to the translators poorly referenced and they or the editors have to spend further time doing what should have been done elsewhere.

103. The Inspectors feel that were the substantive Departments to be made exclusively responsible for substance, form and reference work, the processing of documents at subsequent levels would be speeded up and much wasteful duplication of effort and back-and-forth shuttling avoided.

104. For several years now the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council have urged the Secretariat to provide summaries for its more complicated or technical reports, especially those which for one reason or another are delayed. They have also stressed the usefulness of singling out in each document where Assembly (or Council) action is called for and the type of action required. To date, the

Secretariat's response has been disappointing and for a number of reasons: lack of time (since a summary can allegedly only be prepared once the report itself is completed), the difficulty of summarizing the information or views of governments (which make up the bulk of many reports), etc.

105. The Inspectors feel that these arguments are not very convincing. Many bulky documents (interim or preliminary reports, technical reports and the like) do not call for Assembly action beyond the routine "taking note", forwarding to some other body or postponement of consideration until a later Assembly session. In such cases summaries of the documents are all that delegations need to take such limited action. The documents themselves would still be issued in due course, but with a lower priority, thus unclogging the Secretariat machinery at peak moments in favour of really urgent material. On the other hand, a large portion of United Nations documentation is based originally on government replies or information and yet it is only in the case of sessional documents that the "delicacy" of summarizing such material seems to be invoked.

106. Other organizations of the United Nations family have had to face up to the same problem and have arrived at what the Inspectors feel is a good, if less radical, formula. The FAO Council, for instance, has decided that the cover-page of each document issued for the benefit of the FAO Conference should bear a summary, clearly setting out the points on which Conference action was required, and the nature of such action.

107. The Inspectors hope that the Assembly will see fit to instruct the Secretariat accordingly.

(c) Editing Problems

108. The editing stage in the processing of United Nations documents continues to present serious problems which the Inspectors wish to describe in some detail.

109. This editing is an indispensable, but as the Inspectors see it, time-consuming, confused, wasteful, and still basically unsatisfactory operation.

110. It is indispensable and time-consuming because owing to the absence of agreed presentation standards many documents (as pointed out in paragraphs 101-102) emerge from the substantive Departments in a state unfit for processing; they require often not only editing in terms of style and presentation, but also research into sources and references. The reports of the Special Rapporteurs are a problem in themselves since the latter are sometimes also neglectful as regards source and reference work, the problem being compounded when such reports - as is often the case - arrive literally at the last minute. The Inspectors were given the example of two reports, one 30 pages, the other 112 pages long (plus 300 footnotes) which took Department officers five and twenty man-days respectively, to edit.

111. It is confused because, as was mentioned earlier, the editors are not only supposed to check documents as to their style and presentation, but are also expected to screen their substance; moreover, just as there exist no uniform presentation standards, there is also no clear delineation of responsibilities between the various levels at which the editing takes place.

112. It is wasteful because the editors are expected to screen all documents, even such in-session documents as conference-room papers, draft resolutions, etc., some of which resulted from delicate negotiations at which the editors were most often not even present and which cannot, therefore, be handled solely from the viewpoint of style; other documents never go beyond the meeting for which they are destined, and others are re-edited at some subsequent stage.

113. It is unsatisfactory because apart from consuming time, effort and last but not least money, it is often a source of irritation and frustration to editors and substantive Departments alike.

114. To cite a few examples:

The Secretary-General's 123-page report on "The Application of Computer Technology for Development" (E/4800) figured on the agenda of the Economic and Social Council at its forty-ninth session. Under the six-week rule the document should have been released by 25 May 1970. This admittedly difficult document was received by the

editors late and was therefore reproduced in Geneva and released there on 17 July - too late for it to be examined by the Council and in such poor shape that it had to be re-edited and re-issued.

115. The Secretary-General's 196-page report on "Permanent Sovereignty over Natural Resources" (A/8058) went to the editors at the end of June, but came out only on 17 October, after being edited first in ESA and then in the Secretary-General's Office.

116. The 124-page report on "Human Rights in Armed Conflicts" (A/8052), first issued in an earlier version (A/7720) for the forty-eighth session of the Economic and Social Council, was expected to be completed in August. It was held up by the author and editors until 19 September, being finally released only on 8 October.

117. The eighty-three page report of the Secretary-General on "Housing building and planning" (A/8037) was likewise held up for editing for some six weeks, being released finally on 29 September.

118. The reports of UNIDO and of the High Commissioner for Refugees were in 1970 ready in time for the summer session of ECOSOC. Nevertheless neither had been released under the A/... symbol when the Assembly started its session, apparently because the editors were overburdened with other work. The report of UNIDO (A/8016 - Suppl.16) was issued only on 28 September and the High Commissioner's report (A/8012 - Suppl.12) - though it had been received at Headquarters six weeks earlier, on 13 August - on 2 October.

119. Responsibility for this unsatisfactory situation rests least of all with the editors themselves, who are by and large experienced, dedicated and hard-worked - indeed often overworked - individuals. It rests with the system which seems to have developed over the years (as many other structures of the United Nations) more through improvisation than according to principles of rational management.

120. That it should, and indeed can, be rationalized was recognized by virtually all those with whom the Inspectors talked, in many departments and at many levels.

121. Here again the problem is not new and many suggestions have been advanced by various reviewing bodies, including the JIU itself. Some of them have been wholly or in part implemented. Most of them focused, however, on the organizational aspect of the problem (centralization versus decentralization, etc.).

122. As pointed out in paragraphs 40 to 60 above, after this, their second look at the problem, the Inspectors believe that irrespective of organizational considerations,

the situation will remain unsatisfactory so long as a conceptual confusion is allowed to continue between what are clearly two distinct operations, namely the substantive control of documents in terms of their content and their editing from the point of view of style and agreed UN presentation standards.

123. Having dealt with the problems of substantive documents control in the above-mentioned paragraphs, the Inspectors will address themselves now essentially to the latter problem.

124. In the first place, they feel strongly that here, as elsewhere, one elementary management principle should prevail: no identical operation should be undertaken consecutively by different persons and at different levels. In other words, irrespective of whether editing work is centralized or decentralized, no document should be edited, say, in ESA, then in the Secretary-General's Office, then again, perhaps, prior to the drafting of the financial implications of the project, and finally a fourth time by the editors of Official Records - as happens all too often at present. Moreover if a substantive check at the highest level is required for those documents that may have crucial political implications (at present, the editors in the Secretary-General's Office have to check all A/... documents without exception at a time when they are already very busy working on the Secretary-General's report) this check should be confined to points of policy; it should in no case involve editing in terms of style and presentation.

125. As a general rule, however, the editors should confine their duties to processing the non-meeting or final documents, as well as the substantive reports, but even so, only in terms of style and presentation. Substantive control, source and reference work must become, as already suggested, the exclusive responsibility of the author-Departments. These must also be responsible for the editing (in terms of style and presentation) of all meeting or provisional documents of the bodies they service.

126. Even in ESA, where meeting documents are edited in the Department, the Inspectors wonder whether there is a clear demarcation of the respective responsibilities of the author-Divisions and the Department editors.

127. Any rationalization of editing operations implies in the first place the existence of editing standards common to the whole Organization. The need for such agreed standards, in the form of a Manual, was stressed in 1958 by the Committee on the Control of Documentation (A/3888), confirmed in Resolution 1272 (XIII) by the General Assembly and re-asserted in recommendation 4 of the Inspectors' first report (A/7576).

And yet to date no such manual exists. Its place is taken by a few random instructions - some of them incomplete or outdated - relating to this or that type of document, but primarily by a sort of oral tradition communicated by one editor (or "school" of editors) to the rest, somewhat along the lines of mediaeval craftsmen's guilds. That this system is not satisfactory even at Headquarters is seen from the fact that certain documents shuttle back and forth between editors (even though these belong presumably to the same "school") merely because they happen to differ on a point of capitalization, indentation or use of quotation marks. Away from Headquarters - in Geneva, Vienna and at regional headquarters - confusion reigns, with the result, for instance, that the reports of the Industrial Development Board, UNCTAD and the High Commissioner for Refugees have to be re-edited in New York and their release delayed accordingly.

128. The Inspectors have now been informed that an editing Manual will be issued by the end of 1971. They welcome this development which is long overdue and hope that it will make it possible to confine the very capable editors of the United Nations to the activities for which they are best qualified.

(d) Documents which Appear to be Wholly or in Part Unnecessary

129. The Inspectors were impressed by the number and volume of documents which appear to be wholly (or in part) superfluous, and indeed in some cases quite unnecessary.

130. The most striking example of the former which they came across at the twenty-fifth session was, perhaps, document A/8023/Add.5 (Part I), Chapter XII of the Report of the Special Committee of Twenty-four, concerning Fiji. This document, which had been approved by the Special Committee on 9 October, was issued on 12 October. Needless to say, it was not examined in the Fourth Committee; nor was any action taken on it by the General Assembly.

131. Whilst the Inspectors are aware of the fact that on 12 December 1969 the General Assembly had decided to postpone the consideration of the question of Fiji to its twenty-fifth session and that the Special Committee was justified, therefore, in issuing a report on the question, they wonder whether the timing of this document - two days after Fiji became independent, and on the eve of its admission to the United Nations - was very fortunate, and especially they question its size and content in the light of the situation at the time.

132. Of the document's forty-two pages, three set out its contents and the consideration of and decisions on the question by the Special Committee, while

thirty-seven pages are the usual Secretariat working-papers, summarizing the action already taken by the Special Committee and the General Assembly (rather more than one page) and giving information on the Territory, based on published reports and data transmitted to the Secretary-General by the United Kingdom (thirty-five pages).

133. Elsewhere in this report (see paragraphs 77 to 87) the Inspectors give their views regarding the format of some of the documents of the Special Committee and, specifically, regarding the desirability of including such Annexes (as now drafted) in the Committee's reports.

134. Here they would merely point out that: (a) given the circumstances, it might have sufficed to have a one- or two-page report, issued, say, on the day Fiji became independent and stating that in the light of this development the submission of any additional information was judged superfluous; (b) this particular Annex has in any case been circulated earlier as document A/AC.109/L.631 and Add.1, and is to be issued yet again as part of Supplement No. 23 of the Official Records of the twenty-fifth session of the General Assembly (A/8023/Rev.1); and (c) even if, in view of this year's developments, the length of the section on political and constitutional matters (ten and a half pages) could still be considered justified, the Inspectors fail to grasp why it was seen fit at this late date to devote twenty-four pages to economic, social and educational developments in the territory, which could have no more than academic interest and which had been adequately dealt with in seven pages in the 1969 version of this Annex (A/7623/Add.5 (Part I)), itself the object of repeated reproduction; and (d) apart from the cost factor, it is reasonable to assume that, given the date at which it was issued, this document was translated and reproduced at the expense of other documents which were perhaps more relevant to the General Assembly's immediate tasks.

135. The President of the Security Council, at the opening of each meeting of the Council on a particular subject, indicates which non-members of the Council have requested participation, whether or not the relevant request has been issued as a document; and in subsequent meetings the President reiterates the previous decisions on participation of non-members and brings to the attention of the Council additional requests for participation by non-members, again whether or not the requests have

been issued as documents. The President's indications and the decisions of the Council are reflected in the verbatim records. In the Security Council's annual report to the General Assembly, the participation by non-members of the Council in debates for particular items is indicated.

136. In 1969, there were exactly seventy documents issued in the S/... series containing such requests from non-members of the Security Council. These documents were distributed in the four working languages of the Council so that, in total, 280 language versions were involved. They were issued, as are all Security Council documents, in the "General" series with a total press roll, in all working languages, of 4,569 copies. While the translation and typing of these documents present no particular problem - they are usually only three to five lines in length - the issuance in 1969 of these requests involved the internal reproduction of 319,930 page-units and the use of a similar number of sheets of paper, which had to be distributed. Further, each document requires subsequent micro-filming, recording, indexing and storage.

137. The issuance of these requests as documents in the "General" series could easily be discontinued without prejudice to the issue involved. The relevant letter from the delegation concerned is always on file; the announcement by the President of the Council is reflected in the verbatim records; and the annual report of the Council indicates this feature of its work - and these documents are circulated in the "General" series anyway.

138. The above examples are illustrations of the frequently routine and wasteful approach to the problem of documentation by Secretariat and United Nations bodies alike.

(e) Documents which are Issued too late for Serious Consideration

139. Unlike such other bodies as the Economic and Social Council and its functional and regional economic commissions, the Governing Council of the UNDP, the Trade and Development Board and the Industrial Development Board, the rules of procedure of the General Assembly provide for no deadline for the issuance of pre-session documents, with two exceptions: the Secretary-General's Annual Report, which under rule 48 must be distributed at least forty-five days before the opening of the

session, and the Budget Estimates, which under Financial Regulations 3.4 and 3.5 must be transmitted by the Secretary-General to the ACABQ at least twelve weeks, and to Member States at least five weeks prior to the opening of the regular session of the General Assembly.

140. As for the rest of the documents and even then, only in regard to those which "may involve policy matters of some importance", the Under-Secretary's "Guidelines on the procedure to be followed in matters relating to the General Assembly", dated 3 September 1970, merely remark that "it would be much appreciated if such drafts were presented at least two weeks in advance of the scheduled date of delivery" (OR 421, paragraph 70). This enjoiner, at the twenty-fifth as at earlier sessions, was by and large ignored.

141. As a result at the twenty-fifth as at earlier sessions, some of the Committees started work with only a fraction of their documentation (see Table 4) whilst others had either to postpone the start of their work, or to suspend it for long intervals because of the lack of documentation altogether.

142. More serious still, in a number of cases items had not only to be discussed, but also disposed of before the relevant documentation was made available. This is not merely a habitual phenomenon; the situation is deteriorating from one session of the Assembly to the next. The Inspectors would have wished to include a table illustrating this trend. Unfortunately the records of OCS are not geared to such exercises. Even Table 4 which follows (resulting from their own extrapolations of available data) is incomplete since it could not take account of the many documents in the A/C... series which should normally have been distributed prior to the start of the session.

143. At the twenty-fifth session, for instance, in the Fourth Committee the debate on item 67 ("Activities of Foreign Economic and Other Interests, etc.") started on 13 November. However, the eighty-five-page addendum to the relevant report (document A/8148/Add.1), which gives the bulk of the information on the item, did not come out until three weeks later, on 5 December.

TABLE 4  
Delayed Documents<sup>15/</sup>  
(Twenty-fifth session)

<u>Committee</u>	<u>Documents issued</u> (pages)	<u>Documents issued before</u> <u>start of session (%)</u> (pages) (%)
First	25 (1,061)	15 (60%) (514) (48%)
Special Political	14 (413)	0
Second	17 (539)	3 (18%) (46) (9%)
Third	74 (767)	3 (4%) (45) (6%)
Fourth	28 (1,287)	0
Fifth	35 (1,698)	10 (29%) (432) (25%)
Sixth	7 (425)	4 (57%) (181) (43%)
Total	200 (6,190)	35 (17.5%) (1,218) (20%)

<sup>15/</sup> This table relates exclusively to reports or notes from the Secretary-General or from other sources in the A/... series. It does not include the reports of ACABQ on these documents, which logically should likewise be regarded as "pre-session" documents, but which because of the ACABQ's present time-table must be grouped in the "in-session" category.

144. Of the fourteen reports of the Special Committee of Twenty-four (667 pages) required by the Fourth Committee at the twenty-fifth session for the examination of items 12, 13, 23, 61, 66 and 68 to 70 of its agenda, only five (187 pages) were available when the Committee started the general debate on these items. By then it had already set a deadline for the tabling of resolutions and for the closure of the list of speakers. As a result, resolution A/C.4/L.978 was introduced on the day of the deadline, but the relevant 175-page long chapter of the Special Committee's report relating to the Pacific Islands (Chapter XIV, document A/8023/Add.6) came out three days later, on 11 December.

145. Likewise, the 251-page long Chapter VII of the report of the Special Committee on the Territories under Portuguese Administration (A/8023/Add.3) came out on 13 October. The general debate on this item, however, had started almost one week earlier, on 7 October.

146. Finally, the fifty-seven-page report of the UN Council on Namibia (A/8024 - Suppl.24) came out on 20 October. By then the general debate (which had started on 7 October) was virtually over.

147. A similar, and sometimes even worse situation was observed by the Inspectors in some of the other Committees. It is a matter of common knowledge that the Special Political Committee had to postpone the start of its work until 2 October because none of its main documents were available. The Fourth Committee was one of the last to commence work (on 5 October), likewise because of delays in the issuance of essential documentation.

148. A detailed enquiry into the reasons why documents of the twenty-fifth session were issued late, shows that they fall roughly into the following categories:

- (i) the calendar of meetings;
- (ii) the late initiation of documents;
- (iii) staffing problems within the Secretariat;
- (iv) delays in originating organizations (outside Headquarters);
- (v) the simultaneous release rule;
- (vi) miscellaneous.

(i) The calendar of meetings

149. The calendar of meetings has been a problem common to all UN bodies virtually since their inception and the admitted failure after two years of efforts of the Committee on Conferences established under General Assembly resolution 2239 (XXI) has recently highlighted its acuity which is further aggravated by the fact that even the agreed calendar of meetings is often not respected.

150. In their first report (A/7576), the Inspectors pointed out that the proliferation of meetings at dates close to the Economic and Social Council's session was one of the main reasons why the six-weeks rule had become almost a dead letter. As a consequence, at its forty-ninth session the Council decided inter alia, that "the dates of the meetings of subsidiary bodies ought, as far as possible, to be fixed in such a way as to enable rule 141 (4) to be observed" (decision of 30 July 1970).

151. Of the pre-session documents issued after the start of the twenty-fifth session of the General Assembly the following were delayed because the reporting bodies convened either too close to, or even after, the start of the session.

152. The thirty-five page report of the Executive Director of UNITAR (A/8014 - Suppl.14) was released only on 2 October, apparently because the Board of Trustees of UNITAR met, as usual, only after the Assembly session had started - on 27 to 29 September.

153. The two reports of the Special Committee on Apartheid (A/8022; fifty-eight pages and A/8022/Add.1, fifty-four pages) were issued on 2 and 17 October respectively, apparently because the Committee met until 9 September.

154. The fifty-one page report of the Council for Namibia (A/8024 - Suppl.24) came out on 20 October; it had only been approved on 12 October.

155. The thirty-nine page report of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (A/8027 - Supplement 23) was issued only on 15 October. The second session of the Committee began on 31 August and the report was approved only on 18 September. The situation is unlikely to be much better in 1971, since according to the work plan of the Committee, its second session will go from 23 August to 10 September.

156. Though only three pages long, the report of the United Nations Sub-Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR) (A/8078) may also be mentioned in this connexion, since its delayed release, too, was due to the late session of the Sub-Committee -- from 21 to 25 September.

157. Because the reports of the Special Committee of Twenty-four (A/8023 and addenda; 998 pages) made up at the twenty-fifth, as at earlier sessions, the bulk of the Fourth Committee's documentation and this Committee was among the last to start work, precisely on account of the lack of documentation; because the Special Committee is the only subsidiary body of the General Assembly to work almost on a round-the-year basis, continuing its session virtually to the end of Assembly sessions; and lastly because judging by the records of Documents Control, the late issuance of the Special Committee's documentation is not due to any snag in the translation and reproduction processes, but to their late submission by the Special Committee, the Inspectors studied its methods of work in some detail.

158. At its 713th meeting, on 17 September 1969, the Special Committee decided to hold two sessions in 1970: the first from the last week in January to the last week in June; the second from the middle of July to the first week of September, "subject to any directives the General Assembly might give in that connexion at its twenty-fourth session". Had this timetable been observed (as was the case in the early days of the Committee) it would have completed its work two weeks before the General Assembly started its session and its documentation, presumably, could have become available to the Fourth Committee for timely consideration by that body. This was unfortunately not the case.

159. Instead of starting its first session in the last week in January 1970, the Special Committee convened only on 6 March; and its second session stretched all the way from 20 July to 3 December. For their part, the subsidiary bodies of the Committee completed their work on the following dates: Sub-Committee 3, 14 October; Sub-Committee 2, 27 October; Sub-Committee 1, 12 November; Working Group, 17 November and Sub-Committee on Petitions, 19 November. As a result, the reports of the Special Committee appeared piecemeal throughout the session, the first on 1 October and the last on 14 December.

160. This is all the more surprising since the number of territories on the agenda of the Committee has fallen from fifty-nine in 1964 to roughly forty in 1970; the number of plenary meetings per session has likewise dropped considerably. The Inspectors at first assumed that some of the sub-committees were not able to complete their work on time on account of the belated receipt of information from governments on the various territories with which these sub-committees deal. From the Annex to Chapter XXI of the Special Committee's report (A/8023/Add.8), however, we see that out

of seventeen government reports relevant to the year 1969 which the sub-committees had to process for the benefit of the twenty-fifth session, fourteen were available by 1 August, and all seventeen by 1 September. It would appear, therefore, that the belated completion of the sub-committees' work must be attributed to other causes.

161. The Inspectors note that the records of the autumn meetings of the Special Committee - on account of the priority given to General Assembly documentation - come out with at least three and sometimes five months' delay (for example, A/AC.109/PV.716, covering the meeting of 29 September 1969, came out on 16 January 1970, whilst A/AC.109/PV.719/Corr.1, relating to the meeting held on 21 October 1969, came out on 1 April 1970!). Apart from the need to ensure respect for the Organization's approved calendar of meetings and thus to facilitate the work of the Assembly, it would seem to be in the Special Committee's own best interests, therefore, that it complete its work well ahead of the opening date of the Assembly's sessions, it being understood that the Chairman can always call it back into session if and when the need were to arise.

162. The Inspectors have noted with satisfaction that their concern in this regard is shared by the Special Committee itself, whose Working Group in its comments on the suggestions put forward by OCS for cutting down the volume of documentation of the Committee, remarked that "... the concern of OCS to ensure speedy processing of the documentation for the General Assembly would be more effectively met if the Special Committee made every effort to complete its work well before the opening of the Assembly session concerned" (paragraph 7 of the Working Group's fifty-fourth report to the Special Committee, A/AC.109/L.665, reproduced in Annex III to document A/8023).

163. In the past, suggestions have been made that none of the Assembly's subsidiary bodies should meet while the Assembly itself is in session but no specific action has as yet been taken in this regard. The Inspectors hope that the Assembly may wish to do so now and decide that henceforth all subsidiary bodies will so plan their work programme as to issue their reports before the start of an Assembly session.

164. The Inspectors feel, however, that to make this suggestion viable, the contents of many of these reports must be restructured. The content and format of reports of United Nations bodies have been discussed in detail in an earlier section of this study. Here, therefore, suffice it to recall that many of these reports consist of two types of material: (i) an account of the work of a given body, i.e. the report proper; and (ii) background information on a given territory or a given subject for the period under

review. This second part is now often an integral component of the report, being appended to it as an Annex or an Addendum, and since it is judged imperative to provide the most up-to-date information and the cut-off date is therefore made as late as possible in the year, this material - and, as a result, the whole report - is often issued well into an Assembly session. As pointed out in paragraphs 77 to 87 above, the Inspectors feel as a matter of principle that this background information should not be made an integral part of the report of a body. This being so, they see no valid reason why the bodies concerned should not complete their work and approve their reports to meet the above deadline.

(ii) The late initiation of documents

165. In a number of cases the delay in the issuance of reports to the twenty-fifth session was clearly due to their late initiation.

166. As already noted in paragraph 43, under existing practices the Departments are formally apprised of their responsibilities in following up the resolutions of the preceding General Assembly session through a memorandum from the Under-Secretary-General in Charge of General Assembly Affairs to the respective Department heads. Following the twenty-fourth session this memorandum (OR/311/651) went out on 20 February 1970, i.e. more than seven weeks after the session ended. In May or June the Departments are questioned about those items which they are preparing for the coming session of the Assembly and their replies (which are often the subject of protracted "negotiations" with the Office of the Under-Secretary in Charge of General Assembly Affairs) are reflected in the so-called "Schedule of Documentation" for the next session of the Assembly (OR 421(1) 25th), which in its turn serves as a basis for the Provisional Agenda which the Secretary-General, under rule 13 of the rules of procedure, must issue at least sixty days prior to the start of the session.

167. Most Departments inform their Divisions of their respective responsibilities regarding the various items on the agenda of the Committees they service before or at the start of an Assembly session; the Divisions have then merely to follow through and take follow-up action (if called for). In ESA, however, the Divisions are formally informed of their respective responsibilities by means of a departmental memorandum from the Under-Secretary-General. In 1970 this memorandum went out on 14 March, i.e. more than three weeks after the Department had been formally apprised by the Under-Secretary-General of its responsibilities and eleven weeks or more after the Assembly had adopted the resolutions inviting such action.

168. It goes without saying that all Departments follow closely the proceedings of the Committees they service, so that the internal memoranda allocating responsibility for follow-up action to the various Secretariat units should be mere reminders, helpful in avoiding overlap and confusion. In actual practice, however, follow-up action often does not start until this memorandum is circulated and valuable time is thus lost.

169. As a result, the questionnaires to governments - when such questionnaires are called for - go out in March or even April; the replies are delayed accordingly and the reports themselves come out after the session has started. Indeed as late as May, there is apparently still room for "negotiations" between the various Departments and the Office of the Under-Secretary-General in Charge of General Assembly Affairs regarding their activities as they relate to the coming Assembly session.

170. For example, resolution 2543 (XXIV), which called for information on "the Measures taken by Member States against Nazism and Racial Discrimination", was adopted by the Assembly on 11 December 1969. The questionnaire, however, went out only four months later - on 10 April 1970. The deadline for replies was 15 August. The document (A/8050) was issued on 28 August and a revised version (A/8050/Rev.1) on 15 September.

171. Resolution 2583 (XXIV), which called for a report by the Secretary-General on measures taken by Member States for the "Thorough Investigation of War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity", was adopted by the Assembly on 15 December 1969. The note verbale inviting States to submit this information, however, went out more than three months later, on 20 March 1970. Governments had only three months to reply - until 15 June. The report (A/8038) came out on 21 September.

172. While the number of replies from Member States to questionnaires sent out by the Secretariat in pursuance of resolutions for which many of them had voted in the General Assembly is often disappointing, more timely action is not made easier by the late issuance of the questionnaires - sixteen and twenty weeks from the date of adoption of the relevant resolutions in the two cases which the Inspectors went into in detail.

173. Even so, in both these instances the timing of government response was not the only cause for delayed issuance, since in the first case 72 per cent and in the second, 100 per cent of the replies had reached Headquarters by 1 August.

174. The replies of the governments to the Secretary-General's note verbale dated 20 March 1970, on the "Reservation exclusively for Peaceful Purposes of the Sea-Bed, etc." were issued in four separate documents: A/7925, issued on 30 July (forty-four

replies received by 1 July); A/7925/Add.1, issued on 1 August (eighteen replies: one for June, eleven for July, six for August); A/7925/Add.2, issued on 15 September (four replies: two for July, two for August); A/7925/Add.3, issued on 7 October (eight replies: one for July, seven for September). The First Committee started work on 28 September. The Inspectors would have thought that A/7925/Add.1, 2 and 3 could have been grouped in one document issued before the start of the Committee's work, the replies that came in too late for inclusion in this addendum being simply omitted.

175. One of the explanations given for the delayed issuance of such documents is that "the most informative replies" are often among the last to arrive. This may be. Nevertheless it seems to the Inspectors that the author-Departments could reasonably agree to 1 August as the standard deadline for the preparation of reports on the basis of whatever replies have been received at that time. Later replies would be grouped in one addendum that would be issued prior to the start of business of the Committee, or alternatively prior to the date it starts the examination of the item. This, incidentally, might serve as an incentive to governments not to delay their replies unduly, at the risk of not seeing these replies reproduced at all. Moreover, it would effect a saving in paper and handling operations and streamline the dossier on a given item. It would also obviate the need to put out a three-page addendum containing the reply of only one government (as was the case, at the twenty-fifth session, with document A/8056, Add.2). In many of the Specialized Agencies the same problem is met by means of reminders to Member States, which are sent out once or twice between the despatch of the questionnaire and the deadline. This practice could be developed in the United Nations.

176. As a general rule, work on the follow-up of adopted resolutions should start no later than 15 January. To that effect the Under-Secretary-General's memorandum formally allocating responsibility for follow-up to the various Departments should be issued early in January; the Departments should allocate responsibilities to their various Divisions forthwith and all questionnaires should be sent out within one month. The only exception might be those reports that call for consultations with other bodies, but even then, such consultations should be initiated far sooner and conducted at a far brisker pace than seems to be the case at present. Lastly, the "List of Items" proposed for inclusion in the Provisional Agenda (in 1970, document OR 421 (1) 25th) should be forwarded to the various Departments for comment no later than 15 May.

(iii) Staffing problems

177. A number of documents were delayed owing to the Secretariat staff being overburdened with other work. Elsewhere in this report we mention that the small editorial staff in the Secretary-General's Office is expected to edit all A/... documents without exception, that most of these A/... documents come to them at a time when they must give priority to the Secretary-General's Report, and that, even though such editing is supposed to be confined to matters of substance and policy, in fact, because of the lack of uniform presentation and editing standards and also because of the absence of strict departmental responsibility for the documents these Departments put out, the work may involve also the copy-editing even of those documents that should in principle have been edited elsewhere.

178. The same goes for the substantive Departments. The Division of Human Rights is responsible in some form or another for the documentation of some fifteen bodies, whose meetings are staggered over the year. The Office of Legal Affairs had in 1970, in addition to its regular annual programme, to handle the documentation of two major conferences. In many cases the same small number of staff is responsible for several bulky documents or reports that are scheduled for release in close succession.

179. The Inspectors are the first to welcome the decentralization of translation and reproduction operations to the Geneva office. However, this too often entails delays, owing to the overburdening of the Geneva staff during the summer months and the lack of uniform presentation and editing standards.

180. The Inspectors hope, nevertheless, that their suggestions on the subject of substantive documents control and editing practices may be helpful in relieving some of the burden of the editorial staff and enforcing uniform presentation standards throughout the Organization.

(iv) Delays in originating organizations (outside Headquarters)

181. The preparation of Supplementary Estimates is often delayed owing to the failure of one or other of the regional economic commissions to respect the deadline set for the submission of their requests.

182. The Inspectors would hope that the secretariats of the regional economic commissions can be prevailed upon in the future to respect budgetary deadlines, since otherwise the Fifth Committee might find itself obliged to postpone until the following session its examination of their requests.

(v) The simultaneous release rule

183. The Inspectors are the last to question the need to make United Nations documents available in all languages in good time for their meaningful consideration by all delegations. However a rigid application of the rule, as laid down in resolutions 2247 (XXI) and 2292 (XXII) of the General Assembly, as well as 1090 E (XXXIX) of the Economic and Social Council, is clearly an additional cause for the delayed issuance of documents.

184. From their observation of the situation at the twenty-fifth session and on the strength of their experience with their own reports, the Inspectors feel that it would be wiser to allow for a more flexible interpretation of this rule. So long as the output of the translation sections and typing pools remains as uneven as it is - and this is especially true of Geneva - and although some progress has been achieved, especially with in-session documents and with some of the more important reports, it is doubtful whether the rule can be strictly enforced.

185. On the other hand, in an attempt to do so, vast stacks of documents pile up in the basements, awaiting sometimes for two months or more for the "weakest link" in the production chain to complete its work. When the situation becomes really critical (for instance when the emergency exits are blocked up), the available language versions are released anyway.

186. To some extent, of course, the problem is tied in with that of the length, format and content of documents. It goes without saying that were the substantive control over documents and the editing practices to be improved along the lines suggested in this report, the workload of the language sections would be relieved accordingly.

187. Meanwhile, the General Assembly may judge it more realistic merely to insist that no document be discussed until all language versions are available, the time of release being made dependent on the output capacity of the various language sections.

(vi) Miscellaneous

188. Two documents of the Special Political Committee (which, as is known, had to postpone the start of its business for two weeks owing to the lack of documentation): A/8081, the 9-page report of the Special Committee on Peace-Keeping Operations and A/8013 - Suppl. 13, the 146-page report of the Commissioner General of UNRWA, were held up until 5 and 30 October, respectively. In the first case a breakthrough in the negotiations was hoped for. In the second case the document, though available at Headquarters already in August, was delayed owing to events in the Middle East.

189. The Inspectors are naturally reluctant to speculate whether such delays are justified or whether the Secretariat would have been better advised to plan the issuance of these documents for the start of the Assembly, holding up their release and issuing them in revised form if and when developments justified it. Nevertheless they feel that these examples too should be brought to the Assembly's notice.

190. The Fifth Committee has one of the worst delayed documentation problems of the whole Assembly - for a variety of reasons, some of which have to do with the calendar of meetings (the reports of the ACABQ), some with late cut-off dates (personnel questions), still others with the late receipt at Headquarters of the relevant data (Supplementary Estimates). The situation is particularly serious because of the vast volume of documentation which the Committee has to examine at each session and because to some extent the work of the other sessional committees is tied in with the Fifth Committee's time-table.

191. The calendar of meetings problem is perhaps the easiest to overcome, since the ACABQ makes a point of disposing of the various reports that come to it with a minimum of delay. Moreover, the Inspectors understand that the Committee is considering the possibility of reviewing its time-table in order to complete as much of its work as possible by the time the Assembly starts its session.

192. The Inspectors feel, however, that even the other problems are not insuperable. At the twenty-fifth session the Fifth Committee received 170 documents, totalling 1,044 pages, in the A/C.5 ... and A/C.5/L... series, which came out in dribblets throughout the greater part of the session. A large number of these documents, however, should not have been issued as "in-session" documents at all, since by their very nature they belonged clearly in the "pre-session" series and should therefore have been released in time for the start of the session, or at least in time for the start of the Fifth Committee's work. For lack of space, the Inspectors will not list all the documents which in their opinion belonged not in the "in-session", but in the "pre-session" group, but will confine themselves to a few more obvious examples:

		<u>Pages</u>	<u>Date issued</u>
A/C.5/1299	Implementation of the Recommendations of the <u>Ad Hoc</u> Committee	2	23.IX
A/C.5/1300	Planning of Conferences	2	26.IX
A/C.5/1304	Implementation of the Recommendations of the <u>Ad Hoc</u> Committee	25	2.X

		<u>Pages</u>	<u>Date issued</u>
A/C.5/1320	OPI Review and Appraisal	96	11.XI
A/C.5/1329	Budget Estimates - Revenue-producing activities	3	13.XI
A/C.5/1330	Other personnel questions	2	14.XI
A/C.5/1303/ Add.1	Staff views on salary questions	14	18.XI
A/C.5/1331	Extension of the Palais	12	19.XI
A/C.5/1332	Major maintenance of the Palais	15	19.XI
A/C.5/1333	AMS Survey	26	19.XI
A/C.5/1335	Form of the presentation of the budget and the duration of the budget cycle	-	2.XII
A/C.5/1325 and Add.1	UN Accommodations in Bangkok	15+1(21)	3.XII
A/C.5/1328 and Add.1	UN Accommodations in Addis Ababa	12+1(+11)	3.XII
A/C.5/1348	Questions of establishment of International University	2	9.XII
A/C.5/1349	Santiago Building	8	9.XII

193. Several documents were delayed for reasons which do not fit into any of the above categories, but which deserve mention, to avoid recurrence:

194. A certain number of reports that come annually before the Assembly (such as the twenty-five page report of the Secretary-General on the Draft Declaration on the subject of Religious Intolerance, A/7930; his twenty-eight page report on Freedom of Information, A/8036; etc.) contain only two to three pages of material requiring updating. The rest is made up of Annexes that are reproduced verbatim, some of them for the past twenty years or more. Nevertheless, A/7930 was issued only on 19 August; A/8036 on 25 September.

195. The Inspectors suggest that such documents too be issued in two parts: the Annexes in an addendum, which could be rolled out every year from the same matrices with merely a change of symbol; and the Secretary-General's note (which is the part requiring updating and which usually merely describes the action taken at the preceding Assembly session) as the main document. Both could be issued well ahead of the start of the session, the former being processed at any low period in the Secretariat's activities.

196. The forty-one page report of the Trusteeship Council (A/8004) should have been ready in July. In fact, it was ready only on 25 September. Under present practices this document must be cleared by the President, and he was absent when the draft was completed. It must also be cleared by Member States (and sometimes counter-cleared in the light of one another's observations), and few of them abided by the deadline that had been set.

197. This is a typical example of a document which should be issued at the latest six weeks after the completion of the Council's session and in any event prior to the start of the General Assembly. They therefore suggest that it be included in the mandatory "pre-session" list.

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198. The twenty-fifth session of the General Assembly lasted eighty-four days (weekends included). Had all the required pre-session documentation been available before the session started, each delegation would have had to "digest" at least 167 document pages a day. Since, as is shown in Table 4, no more than 20 per cent of this documentation was in fact available before the session started, the amount of documents to be "digested" is in fact much higher. Whatever the amount, any such requirement is clearly unrealistic, even for the larger delegations, but especially for the smaller ones. In other words, therefore, much of this documentation is of no practical use to them.

199. But apart from the obvious difficulties caused to Member States this situation has also financial consequences, since Committee sessions extend sometimes well beyond their reasonable limit, thus raising the overall cost of an Assembly session; moreover since many costly documents serve no practical purpose, the money spent on preparing them is in effect wasted. Lastly, from the point of view of a more rational use of Secretariat capacity the earlier submission for translation, reproduction and issuance of documents, and especially of those that are not dependent on last-minute pre-Assembly meetings, would ensure a more even spread over the year of the workload of the services of the Secretariat concerned, thus reducing the accumulation of work at a time when these services are taxed most - the period of the General Assembly and that immediately following.

200. Despite these obvious shortcomings and despite the constant complaints of delegations, this situation tends to be judged if not exactly as normal, at least as virtually incurable. Indeed it is suggested that even those documents which are issued late or which, because of their length, cannot be "digested" by delegations, serve their purpose anyway since they may be of use to various national administrations or institutions.

201. The Inspectors cannot stress too strongly that United Nations documents are produced for the benefit of those bodies which are to take action on them; the use to which other potential beneficiaries may put them cannot be invoked to justify failure to provide the prime users with the type of document they need at the time they need it. Moreover they believe that the timely availability of documents should be a determining factor in the Assembly's decision to examine this or that item of its agenda at a given session. In their first report (A/7576) they addressed several recommendations to this problem. Pursuant to these recommendations, ECOSOC, at its forty-ninth session, tightened up further its six-week rule by requesting the Secretary-General to "plan the preparation of his reports to the Council in such a way as to observe the six-week rule" (decision I (g) of 30 July 1970) and by way of a warning, it refused to examine two reports issued after the deadline.

202. In view of the perennial nature of the problem and of its tendency to become more acute rather than to improve over the years, the General Assembly may also see fit to resort to rather more drastic measures than were judged necessary heretofore. To this effect, it may wish to follow the precedent set by ECOSOC and: (i) adopt a rule that would make mandatory the issuance prior to the start of its sessions of certain documents (for instance, all those Supplements for which a late cut-off date has not been specifically requested by the General Assembly); (ii) make the availability of all relevant documentation prior to the start of business of the Committee which is to examine the item in question a conditio sine qua non for such examination at a given session, unless the Committee decides otherwise.

(f) Multiple Documentation Originating from Bodies with Overlapping Mandates

203. The Inspectors came across several cases where documents providing virtually identical information were issued by different bodies - each of them in four languages, each of them with complete press-runs, first in the A/AC... or A/CN... series ("General" or "Limited"), then again in the A/... ("General") series and, lastly, as supplements of the Official Records.

204. It has been justly said that "everything human is human rights". Nevertheless the duplication in the documentation on subject-matters relating to human rights and discussed in several bodies, appears excessive. Indeed not only is it wasteful of time and resources, but it is counter-productive, inasmuch as it disperses, instead of concentrating United Nations efforts in tackling the usually intractable human rights problem. For example, at one time there were three subordinate bodies of the Commission on Human Rights alone dealing with the question of apartheid. On the recommendation of the Commission, the Economic and Social Council called for a document setting forth the terms of reference and activities of United Nations bodies working in this field. The report (E/4817) is, for all its excessive detail (sixty-five pages), illuminating but the Economic and Social Council merely took note of it.

205. Although the United Nations Council for Namibia puts out annually a comprehensive report on that territory, issued in four languages, as a supplement to the Official Records (in 1970: document A/8024 - Supplement No. 24; fifty-one pages) and which includes a section on "Activities of Foreign Economic and Other Interests in Namibia" (in 1970: four pages), the Special Committee of Twenty-four puts out in its own name another report on the same territory (in 1970: A/8023/Add.2, 39 pages) which includes a section covering the same subject (in 1970: 9 pages). This document is issued first in the A/AC.109 series ("General" or "Limited"); then as part of the Special Committee's report in the A/... series, and finally as part of Supplement No. 23 of the Official Records. In 1970 the same information figured on fifteen pages of yet a third document, namely the Special Committee's separate report on "Foreign Economic and Other Interests" (A/8148 and Add.1), which was issued twice - in the A/... series and as Supplement No. 23A of the Official Records. The result is that instead of a single document, consisting of at the most fifteen pages,

issued once only in the "General" series under the symbol of the United Nations Council for Namibia, the same information, on the same territory, was reported in three documents.

206. The Inspectors realize that this issue goes beyond the narrow subject of documentation and that various other matters, too, are discussed by more than one body; however, since this situation contributes significantly to the volume of documentation, the Inspectors hope that the General Assembly will wish to take an early look at the whole problem of subsidiary bodies whose mandates or activities show clear signs of overlap with a view to concentrating to the maximum extent possible in the hands of a single body all studies relating to a given subject.

(c) Documents which are Issued at too Frequent Intervals

207. Since the early days of the Organization, the General Assembly and its Committees have adopted the practice of requesting the Secretary-General to prepare reports annually on certain matters. As the activities of the Organization have increased both in quantity and in complexity, the preparation of such reports has become more and more irksome and this, combined with a natural desire to give the most up-to-date information, has resulted in the reports being issued progressively later. Every year some, at least, become available to Member States much too late for proper consideration by the relevant bodies of the General Assembly. The Inspectors saw, or were previously aware of many such documents, the value of which is open to serious doubt because by the time they are issued the bodies concerned have no time left, and perhaps little inclination, to take up a new matter which would oblige them to reorganize their work, by then subject to a tight schedule.

208. An example of such reports is that which concerns the composition of the Secretariat, submitted under agenda item 82, "Personnel Questions". At the twenty-fifth session this report (A/8156) was not issued until the Fifth Committee was coming to the end of its work. When the Inspectors asked why it could not be prepared earlier, they were informed that the date of submission of the original text for translation, reproduction, etc. was 15 October and this, in order to ensure that the document gave the most up-to-date picture of geographical distribution in the Secretariat. Finally, the document was issued on 19 November. It was considered by the Fifth Committee during a part of seven meetings between 1 and 10 December, the debate ending with a request, repeated every year, that the Secretary-General "continue his efforts to achieve a better geographical

distribution of the staff at all levels". Less than twenty representatives had participated in the discussion, no doubt because the document was issued too late for most of them to obtain instructions from their governments.

209. Elsewhere in this report the Inspectors have gone in some detail into the whole problem of the Fifth Committee's documentation. Here they will say merely that far from wishing to minimize in any way the importance of geographical distribution in the Secretariat, they believe that a more meaningful discussion on this subject could be held if it were to take place every two years rather than every year, on the basis of a report of the Secretary-General which would be issued prior to the opening of the General Assembly rather than during the concluding weeks of its session.

210. Another example of a report which might gain in content and provoke more useful discussion if issued every two years rather than annually, is the ACABQ's report on the administrative budgets of the agencies (A/8155 in 1970). This report is issued every **year** in accordance with the ACABQ's terms of reference which provide that it shall, inter alia, examine the administrative budgets of the specialized agencies. For many years this report has consisted of a somewhat general review of the budgets, partly because the ACABQ's overall activities have been steadily increasing and time was not available for a more detailed examination, partly because no more than a day could be spent with each agency representative. Despite the Fifth Committee's repeated requests that it be issued earlier in the session, the report has always appeared very late and has given rise to little or no discussion in the Committee.

211. In the early days most of the agencies - and more particularly the larger ones - had annual budgets, and bearing in mind the ACABQ's terms of reference, such an annual exercise, so long as its results were published in good time, could perhaps be justified. Now most of the agencies have biennial budgets, the annual review of which is hardly practical.

212. All in all, the Inspectors believe that the annual issuance of quite a number of these reports has become a matter of routine with scant relevance to the realities of the various situations and that the General Assembly would not be the loser were they to be issued biennially rather than annually; at the same time, this would contribute to the overall reduction in documentation which is recommended in this report.

213. In 1958 the Committee on the Control and Limitation of Documentation (A/3888) had suggested the spacing out of reports over longer intervals, as did the Inspectors in their first report (A/7576, recommendation 25 (a)). The Economic and Social Council, for its part, has in its Resolutions 1154 (XXLI) and in its Decisions taken at its forty-seventh and forty-ninth sessions, respectively, expressed the same concern. The Inspectors hope that the General Assembly will wish to lend its authority to the Council's concrete suggestions.

214. The Inspectors recommend, therefore, that the Secretary-General, in consultation with the ACABQ, review all recurrent documents that are issued at present annually and make proposals to the General Assembly for their issuance at biennial or triennial intervals.

(h) Unnecessary Translation of Documents

215. As can be seen from Table 5, the volume of translated (and revised) documentation at Headquarters has followed a less consistent trend than the volume of documentation as a whole - up by only 2 per cent since 1967 (as compared to an increase in reproduced documentation of 10 per cent over the same period). The volume of contractual translation, however, has soared by 18 per cent and its cost by 68 per cent. Only the backlog of documents awaiting translation has dropped - in 1970 alone by 92 per cent.

TABLE 5<sup>16/</sup>  
Translation Output and Backlog  
(Final standard pages in all languages)  
(Headquarters)

	<u>1970</u>	<u>1969</u>	<u>1968</u>	<u>1967</u>
<u>Internal reproduction</u> (%)	499,141 (+6%)	470,234 (+1%)	465,117 (+3%)	451,847
<u>Actual annual translation/revision output</u> (%)	168,984 (-2%)	172,190 (+8.5%)	158,638 (-4%)	165,269
<u>Contractual translation/revision</u> (%)	40,765 (+4%)	39,237 (+5.4%)	37,243 (+7.6%)	34,617
<u>Cost of contractual translation/revision</u> (US\$) (%)	350,000 (or more) (+40%)	250,000 (+33%)	188,242 (-5%)	198,000
<u>Backlog</u> <sup>17/</sup> (%)	7,500 (-92%)	96,680 (+9%)	88,462 (+10%)	80,329

216. Irrespective of this growing backlog, however, which is accounting for an increasingly large share of the United Nations expenditure on documentation, the question arises as to whether it is necessary to translate automatically into all the official languages all documents without exception.

217. The Inspectors are well aware that in raising this issue they tread delicate ground and that the reasons invoked to date for doing so are not necessarily practical ones. On the other hand, since the volume of translation contributes to

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16/ Source: Headquarters, OCS, Editorial and Official Records Services, Documents Control: Internal statistics. Geneva Office, Conferences Division, Documents Control Section: Internal Statistics.

17/ Though in 1969 the Russian and Chinese backlog dropped by about 1,800 pages each, that of the other languages, especially the Spanish, increased by a substantially higher figure. In 1970, most of the backlog was, as can be seen, wiped out - at substantial cost. The backlog in Chinese, however, is still considerable - 42,000 pages.

the growing volume of documentation generally and since as a consequence of this backlog (which involves particularly the Annexes of the Official Records and, generally, dated documents), many of these appear in the various languages just in time to be scrapped (together with the rest of the obsolete stocks), the Inspectors wonder whether this sector, too, should not be investigated with a view to possible savings.

218. In 1947 (i.e. at a time when the Organization's documentation was but a fraction of what it is today), Ambassador Aghnides, the Chairman of the ACABQ, wondered whether all the Official Records and especially those of a "historical" nature, which were required essentially for reference purposes, must needs be automatically translated into all official languages. This was especially true, he felt, about those documents that had been extensively amended in committee and were therefore merely of a passing interest. What delegations needed most, he said, were the various language versions of the working documents required in the discussions. Were reference material required later, this could be translated into a given language on request. For his part, Mr. Pelt (at the time Assistant Secretary-General and head of the Department of Conference Services) pointed out that the records of the Fifth Committee, for instance (and this included even the Budget), were not widely read after the close of an Assembly session.

219. The Inspectors hope that the General Assembly will see fit to request the Secretary-General to suggest new procedures precluding the automatic translation into all languages of all United Nations documents, especially those of a strictly "historical" nature. In this connexion, they believe that the purchase of the up-to-date storage-and-retrieval equipment recommended in paragraph 227 will make it possible to organize the rapid translation upon request of any document or excerpt of a document required by a given delegation.

220. Pending the approval of such revised procedures, the Inspectors would suggest that the Secretariat be requested to submit annually to the ACABQ prior to the start of an Assembly session a list of those documents which await translation, this list being broken down into page-numbers, languages and costs, so that the ACABQ may recommend to the Assembly which of these translations can be dispensed with.

(i) Unnecessarily Wide Distribution of Certain Documents

221. Distribution is one of the only areas in which the Secretariat, acting upon General Assembly Resolution 593 (VI), as well as on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/7576) and of the Committee on the Reorganization of the Secretariat (A/7359) has been successful to date in curtailing the volume of documentation. Between 1967 and 1969 distribution dropped by some 12 per cent. In 1967, for instance, the "Limited" series was dropped from the Official Mailing List with a savings each time of 400 copies, i.e. 9 per cent of the total. Since early 1970 "Limited" documents (which have nowadays almost as wide a distribution as documents in the "General" series) are being replaced more and more by "CRP's" (i.e. "Conference Room Papers") which have less than half the press-run (2,000 copies in all languages, as compared to 4,300). At the twenty-fifth session, in the Fifth Committee, draft resolutions, amendments and other proposals, were circulated in the CRP series - with satisfactory results. The Inspectors commend these efforts and hope that this practice will be extended to all other United Nations bodies and that eventually the "Limited" series can be reduced to the original purpose it was supposed to serve.

222. The Secretariat has been less successful, however, in cutting down individual quotas such as the Official Mailing List (still 400 copies) and the internal services of the Secretariat (more than 350 copies). Moreover the figure for Secondary Distribution (72,059 copies at the twenty-fifth session, as against 116,860 at the twenty-fourth) remains unnecessarily high.

223. The situation is to be thoroughly reviewed by the Publications Board in 1971, hopefully with even better results. Meanwhile, the Inspectors would suggest that greater use might be made of reproduction facilities away from Headquarters - for instance in Geneva and in the case of the larger conferences, generally, as well as those of national governments (whose needs should in principle be covered by the delegation quotas).

224. In reducing Secondary Distribution requirements, however, the co-operation of delegations, is, needless to say, essential. There are a number of more or less legitimate reasons why delegations may mislay documents or require additional copies. On the other hand, a greater effort on their part is called for to help

control an important aspect of the present documentation "explosion" about which these delegations are the first to voice legitimate concern. To this effect two practical steps come to mind:

- (a) At the start of each General Assembly session, at the same time as he sums up document A/INF/136 (or its successors), the Chairman might admonish delegates verbally to discipline themselves to keep their copies carefully and to refrain from asking for further copies. At the same time he might also give the figure (and cost) of Secondary Distribution for the preceding session (of which the Secretariat keeps a record);
- (b) Though many of the documents listed for a given item in the Journal may not be actually required for the said meeting, they are often the object of blanket secondary requests by delegations merely because they are listed in the Journal, only to be discarded or mislaid shortly thereafter. Thought might be given to listing in the daily Journal only the actual meeting documents (S.G. notes, draft resolutions, CRP's, etc.), the main reports and background documents figuring once only - in the initial documents list, which is, or should be issued for every Committee at the start of the session;
- (c) On the cover page of each document, enclosed in a box for greater impact, there should be some formula along the following lines:

For reasons of economy, this document is produced in a limited number of copies. Delegates and observers are requested not to mislay their copy and to refrain from asking for additional copies.
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This practice has been followed by FAO for several years with excellent results.

225. While looking into the question of distribution, the Inspectors came across one category of documents which, while not being General Assembly documents in the strict sense of the term, are nevertheless reproduced and distributed in large numbers and are consequently occupying staff time which could be used for other purposes. The documents in question are those which are issued to the staff of the

Secretariat as Administrative Instructions, Information Circulars, etc. Among such documents issued while the Inspectors were in New York was one concerning the transportation of privately owned automobiles in Equatorial Guinea and New Caledonia; another announced the promotion of a manual worker to the M-5 level. The communication of such information to a limited group of staff members, say to the Executive Officers or to the service directly concerned, is no doubt necessary or desirable, but the Inspectors fail to see why they should have a desk to desk distribution, which means in practice some 8,000 copies, most of which are hastily thrown into the waste-paper basket.

226. The Inspectors also noticed that each time the Secretary-General absents himself from Headquarters, this is brought to the attention of all staff members by a standard text, distributed in 8,000 copies. In one case, his absence was for one day only. As in the cases mentioned in the previous paragraph, the Inspectors believe that a limited distribution of such circulars would be both more appropriate and more economical.

227. During their inspection of the reproduction shops, the Inspectors were also impressed by the number and volume of various kinds of documentation held in stock in order that future requests may be satisfied. Apart from the constant fire hazard, it is evident that such wasteful use of space could be avoided, to a large extent, by the use of modern retrieval systems. The Inspectors were informed that tests were under way with a micro-film process which would permit the rapid reproduction of a document and an 80 per cent saving on the cost of reprinting by existing methods. It is true that the necessary equipment would cost some \$26,000, but representatives of the Secretariat assured the Inspectors that this sum would be amortized in less than one year.

#### IV. Records of Meetings

228. The records of United Nations meetings represent one of the sectors of documentation in which the General Assembly and the Council have most insistently pressed for a reduction and made concrete recommendations to that effect.

229. The General Assembly, in its Resolutions 2292 (XXII), 2478 (XXIII) and 2538 (XXIV), recommended that SR's be limited to a restricted number of bodies and laid down certain rules regarding the records' contents; and in Resolution 2538 (XXIV) it decided, furthermore, that no body would be provided with both PV's and SR's. The ACABQ had already in 1967 suggested that no body be provided with SR's "below the Board level"<sup>18/</sup> (A/6707). One of the Inspectors in his report on "The Use of Minutes instead of Summary Records" (E/4802) went further, recommending as did the Committee on Conferences (A/7626) that the use of minutes in lieu of SR's be practised more widely, a suggestion which the General Assembly had already endorsed implicitly in its Resolution 2538 (XXIV). The Secretary-General, in his comments to the Inspector's report on the Use of Minutes (E/4802/Add.1) has gone further still, suggesting that in certain cases records be dispensed with altogether.

230. There is thus virtual unanimity on the desirability of reducing the volume of records produced in the United Nations: (i) by replacing wherever feasible PV's by SR's and the latter by some even less costly or more succinct formula (such as provisional PV's, minutes or a mere mention in reports); and (ii) by limiting the use of records to as few bodies as possible.

231. The results (see Table 6) are, again, disappointing. Thus, although only two additional bodies were provided with records in 1970 (seventy-eight as against seventy-six in 1969), the number of meetings provided with records increased in one year by 10 per cent, the volume of PV's by 23 per cent (one language) and 10 per cent (all languages), and that of SR's by 14 per cent (all languages).

232. Officially, these increases in 1970 are attributed to the expanding use of provisional PV's instead of SR's (which are more economical since the translators who write up the SR's can now be used for other work) - for instance in the Trusteeship Council and the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories - as well as to the Commemorative Session of the General Assembly. For its part the increase in

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<sup>18/</sup> In the context of the ACABQ's recommendation, this meant the Trade and Development Board and the Industrial Development Board.

TABLE 6  
Meeting Records<sup>22/</sup>

	<u>1970</u>	<u>1969</u>	<u>1968</u>	<u>1967</u>
<u>Number of bodies provided with records</u> <sup>19/</sup>	78	76	?	?
<u>Number of meetings provided with records</u> (%)	6,513 (+10%)	5,927 (+13%)	5,227 (-6%)	5,563
<u>Volume of records</u> <sup>20/</sup> (final standard pages)				
<u>PV's</u>				
One language (%)	13,275 (+23%)	10,820 (-19%)	13,418 (-9.5%)	14,827
All languages (%)	44,430 (+10%)	40,291 (+14%)	35,346 (-9%)	38,937
<u>SR's</u>				
Two-three languages (%)	19,379 (+14%)	17,026 (-10%)	18,901 (-17%)	22,628

19/ Headquarters only

20/ Broken down between Headquarters and Geneva, the figures are:

PV's

One language

New York (%)	12,239 (+27%)	9,661 (-24%)	12,675 (-11%)	14,300
Geneva (%)	1,036 (-11%)	1,159 (+56%)	743 (+41%)	527

SR's

Two-three languages

New York (%)	11,926 (+6%)	11,224 (-12%)	12,787 (-5%)	13,450
Geneva <sup>21/</sup> (%)	7,453 (+28%)	5,802 (-5%)	6,114 (-33%)	9,178

21/ English-French

22/ Source: Headquarters; OCS, Editorial and Official Records Services, Documents Control, Internal statistics. Geneva Office: Conferences Division, Documents Control Section, Internal statistics.

the volume of SR's is attributed to meetings of UNCITRAL and UNCTAD which in 1969 had been held in Geneva and in 1970 were held in New York. And yet, as far as SR's are concerned, the increase in volume at Headquarters is 1 per cent above the corresponding drop in Geneva so that this explanation may not be entirely satisfactory.

233. Furthermore, of the three international conferences authorized by the General Assembly at its twenty-fourth session, two will be provided with SR's at their plenary meetings, as will two of the conferences called for at the forty-eighth and forty-ninth sessions of ECOSOC.

234. On the other hand there have been a few encouraging developments. For instance, the statistics for 1970 show an increased use of minutes: 420 pages (English only), but this is no more than 0.6 per cent of the total.

235. At present the only body provided, with the explicit authorization of the Assembly, with both PV's and SR's is the Special Political Committee. However, though the number of its meetings has gone up, the number of verbatim transcriptions requested by the Committee dropped from thirty-three in 1967 to nine in 1970, and six of these nine were only partial.

236. It would appear, nevertheless, that the encouraging trends of 1968 and 1969 were also temporary and that the volume of records is on the way up again, together with most other sectors of United Nations documentation. The Inspectors feel, therefore, that the General Assembly may wish to be, here too, more insistent in urging further economies, for instance by replacing, wherever possible, SR's either by minutes (as suggested by one of the Inspectors (E/4802)) or by the even more economical methods suggested by the Secretary-General in his comments to the Inspector's report (E/4802/Add.1).

237. Some of the Specialized Agencies now use records in the original language only. Whilst this undoubtedly accounts for substantial cuts in the volume of these records, the Inspectors doubt whether this saving is justified in all cases in view of the reduced intelligibility of these records. On the other hand, they wonder whether the bodies provided with PV's for hearings (and these account for a growing share of the total PV volume, besides posing particular difficulties under field conditions, where adequate technical facilities are not available) might not be able to content themselves with the original language version only.

## V . Press Releases

238. Whereas press releases do not form part of the official documentation of the General Assembly, they are nevertheless issued by the Office of Public Information pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 595 (VI) of 4 February 1952, which required the latter, inter alia, to provide "such services as may be necessary to ensure that the daily, weekly and periodical press is supplied with full information about the activities of the United Nations". Press releases cover all principal United Nations meetings and it is for this reason that the Inspectors felt that they should be included in their general enquiry into United Nations documentation.

239. Over the past four years the number of press releases has averaged approximately 3,500 per year and the number of pages has varied between 14,000 and 18,000. The standard run for each release is 1,300 copies, of which 300 are placed at the disposal of correspondents in the press room on the third floor of the Secretariat building and approximately 1,000 are sent down to the printing shops in the basement for collation, binding and distribution to delegations and Secretariat.

240. The coverage of meetings and the production of press releases is at present performed by twelve professional officers on a continuing basis, reinforced by nine others recruited temporarily during the General Assembly, assisted by ten permanent general service staff and fourteen others recruited temporarily during the period of the General Assembly.

241. The Inspectors are aware of the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in document A/C.5/1320 (paragraphs 86-98) for curtailing the total output of press releases which would lead to some reduction in the staff requirements for their production. Whilst welcoming these suggestions, the Inspectors feel, however, that selective judgment as to which meetings or which subjects should be covered, and to what extent, is a matter of policy which the General Assembly alone can decide. In the course of their own enquiry into the matter of press releases they did nevertheless find one area in which they believe that substantial economies could be made.

242. The 1,000 copies which are sent down daily to the printing shop for collation and distribution to delegations and Secretariat comprise on the average 170,000 page-units, the collation of which alone occupies between 8-10 hours daily on the gathering machine. This machine has a limited capacity and official documents of the General Assembly and its Committees are always given priority over press releases.

The result is that there is an enormous accumulation of uncollated press releases in the workshops and distribution to delegations and Secretariat is delayed for a week or sometimes even two weeks. The Inspectors visited the workshops on 20 November and saw huge piles of pages of press releases concerning meetings which had been held on 13 November and no date could be given for their ultimate distribution.

243. One of the justifications for press releases is that they are issued within a few hours of the conclusion of a meeting, while summary records do not appear for anything from 2-3 days after the meeting. Whereas the press releases which are placed at the disposal of correspondents in the press room on the third floor are without doubt of great value to the correspondents, and indeed to many delegations who also avail themselves of this facility, it is open to serious doubt whether the same releases distributed to delegations and Secretariat a week or more after the event are of any value whatever, since by that time the summary records will have become available.

244. The Inspectors were informed that if this distribution were discontinued, two machine operators could either be dispensed with or put to more productive work. Such a reduction would result in economies of the order of \$12,000 net per annum, not to mention related savings on paper and distribution.

245. The total net annual economies could consequently be approximately:

	\$
(a) reduction of two professional and two general service established posts (as foreseen by the Secretary-General in paragraph 97 of document A/C.5/1320)..... ..	34,000
(b) reduction of temporary assistance - two professional and four general service posts - during the period of the General Assembly (as foreseen in paragraph 98 of the same document)..... ..	40,000
(c) reduction of two machine operators (as resulting from the adoption of the Inspectors' recommendation set forth above)..... ..	12,000
	<hr/> 86,000 <hr/>

#### VI Publications

246. In paragraph 251 of its report on the 1971 budget estimates (A/8008) the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions said that it was "not satisfied that the value of all the publications provided for is commensurate with their cost to the Organization" and suggested that this was a question into which an enquiry might usefully be made. As a result of these observations, the General Assembly requested the Joint Inspection Unit to undertake such an enquiry and to submit its report through the appropriate channel to the General Assembly at its twenty-sixth session (Resolution 2732 (XXV)).

247. In response to the General Assembly's request the Joint Inspection Unit will make publications the subject of a separate report. Actually, as was already stated, in conducting the present enquiry it was not always possible to separate the documents proper of the General Assembly from those publications which reflect its work or are indirectly related to it but are not prepared for specific consideration by the General Assembly. Suffice it to say in the present report that the Inspectors have adequate evidence so far to conclude that the observations of the Advisory Committee appear very pertinent and that they expect to be able to propose measures which should lead to a rationalization also of the UN publications programme.

## VII. The Proliferation of Conferences and Meetings

248. The problem posed by the proliferation of meetings and conferences is a long-standing one and has been the subject of studies by various UN bodies and of resolutions adopted by the General Assembly. The Ad Hoc Committee on the Improvement of the Methods of Work of the General Assembly devoted its attention to this problem and made certain recommendations which were approved by the General Assembly. The Assembly itself has repeatedly voiced concern in this regard and beginning from 1957 has adopted a number of resolutions e.g. 1202 (XII), 1851 (XVII), 2116 (XX), 2239 (XXI), 2361 (XXII), 2478 (XXIII), 2609 (XXIV), 2693 (XXV). In resolution 2239 (XXI) of the 20th September 1966, the General Assembly established, on an experimental basis and subject to review by the Assembly at its 24th session, a Committee on Conferences for the purpose of rationalising the programme of conferences in the UN, and for putting a brake on the rapid and uncontrolled proliferation of conferences and meetings. In its second report to the Assembly (A/7626), the Committee on Conferences came to the conclusion that unless its mandate were strengthened, it could not effectively perform the functions for which it was set up. Its membership has not been renewed and there now exists, therefore, no effective instrument for planning, co-ordinating or controlling the various conferences and meetings of the United Nations.

249. At present every subsidiary body of the Assembly is entitled to decide its own programme of meetings and to create subsidiary bodies of various kinds which in turn are entitled to create their own subsidiary bodies and establish their own programme of meetings. There are no formal restrictions to this situation. Apart from the General Assembly itself, nowhere are decisions to create new subsidiary bodies or to hold additional meetings co-ordinated within the framework of UN activities and with due regard to the availability of financial resources; and the General Assembly itself is unable, because of its other preoccupations and the shortage of time, to undertake effective co-ordination. It can, in most cases, only give its approval to the often incomplete list prepared by the Secretary-General.

250. The result has been a dramatic increase both in the number of United Nations bodies and in the number of conferences and meetings. Thus, over the past ten years, 124 new bodies have been set up. At the same time, the number of meetings held by subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly in New York and at Geneva increased from 4,652 in 1965 to 6,530 in 1970. The latter figure includes 2,786 meetings in New York and 3,727 at Geneva.

251. In principle, the creation of new bodies and the increase in the number of conferences and meetings testifies to the expanding activities of the United Nations. However, unless it is controlled and properly co-ordinated in the light of the financial capacity of the Organization and the ability of Member States to participate effectively in the process, this development has negative aspects as well. For one thing, it is without doubt the greatest single factor contributing to the documentation "explosion" in the United Nations, since each new subsidiary body has to be fed by additional documentation and in turn generates more documentation.

252. The Inspectors did not have time in the course of the present study to go into all the various aspects of this problem - nor were they in fact asked to do so by the General Assembly in resolution 2609 (XXIV). Nevertheless, they are convinced that if the recommendations regarding the reduction and control of documentation which they make in this report are to be really effective, more stringent measures to control the overall programme of conferences and meetings must be devised and applied. They would suggest, therefore, that the General Assembly arrange for a special study to be made of the problem. Pending the results of such a study, they suggest that the General Assembly insist on the implementation of its earlier decisions.

253. The Inspectors note, for instance, that in 1963 the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts to Examine the Finances of the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies recommended in its second report (A/6343, paragraph 104 (d)), among other things, that in the budgets of the organizations of the United Nations family the costs of the conferences and meetings should be the subject of an annex containing an estimate of the total expenditure pertaining directly and indirectly to these activities. Pursuant to this recommendation, the CCAQ developed a standard format for use by the organizations in presenting such expenditure. Annex II gives the estimates prepared, according to this format, by the Director-General of the ILO in his Programme and Budget Proposals for 1972-73 (document GB. 182/FA/11/19). As can be seen from this Annex, the estimates are broken down to cover such detailed items of expenditure as: (i) salaries and overtime of temporary staff; (ii) travel costs of participants and staff; (iii) documents; (iv) equipment and supplies; (v) freight, postage and cable charges; (vi) hospitality; and (vii) salaries and other staff costs of (a) conferences services; (b) documents services; (c) linguistic services; (d) planning, preparation and servicing, and (e) preparation of reports.

254. In the United Nations this recommendation of the Ad Hoc Committee has not to date been implemented. The relevant information annex to the budget estimates does, it is true, contain a total figure for the expenditures envisaged by the Secretary-General for conference services. But this figure is not directly related to the programme of conferences and meetings; nor is it broken down into the various distinctive items of expenditure. The main component is salaries and wages for conference servicing staff, plus appropriations for temporary assistance and for certain other costs. From the information annex to the budget estimates, therefore, it is difficult to obtain a clear idea of the cost to the Organization of the conferences or meetings held by any individual body of the United Nations.

255. The Inspectors suggest that the above recommendation be re-endorsed by the General Assembly and that the budget of the Organization include: (i) a special line showing the expenditure directly attributable to conferences and meetings; and (ii) an annex containing an estimate of the total expenditure pertaining directly and indirectly to these activities, in line with the format prepared by the CCAQ.

256. Decisions by United Nations bodies to hold conferences or meetings or to create new Committees, sub-committees, groups or sub-groups usually have financial implications for the Organization; and, under the terms of rule 154 of the General Assembly <sup>23/</sup>, such decisions may not be recommended for approval unless they are "accompanied by an estimate of expenditure prepared by the Secretary-General". Unfortunately this rule is rarely complied with; and it is not complied with at all in regard to the programme of conferences and meetings submitted by the Secretary-General for approval by the General Assembly.

257. The Inspectors recommend that all subsidiary bodies be required to observe henceforth strictly rule 154 of the rules of procedure and that the General Assembly, for its part, when it approves the programme of conferences and meetings, approve at the same time the budgetary appropriations for them.

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23/ Rule 154 reads as follows :

"No resolution involving expenditure shall be recommended by a committee for approval by the General Assembly unless it is accompanied by an estimate of expenditures prepared by the Secretary-General. No resolution in respect of which expenditures are anticipated by the Secretary-General shall be voted by the General Assembly until the Administrative and Budgetary Committee has had an opportunity of stating the effect of the proposal upon the budget estimates of the United Nations."

258. The Inspectors note that a cause for additional confusion and expenditure is the tendency of many subsidiary bodies (or of the additional bodies created by them) to change, often at the last minute, the dates and sometimes even the place of their sessions. The Inspectors recommend that henceforth the dates and place of scheduled conferences and meetings should not be changed if this change involves additional expenditure for the United Nations.

#### VIII. General Conclusions

259. As can be seen from Table 1, the volume of United Nations documentation (in terms of pages) has risen over the past four years at a fairly steady rate of 2.3 per cent per annum. Were this trend to continue and were efforts to arrest it to stay confined to mere admonishments and exhortations, the figure by 1980 would be about 1.1 million pages. Thus the number of pages requiring to be "digested" by delegations would have risen from 600 a day in 1970 to almost 750 a day, Saturdays and Sundays included. In other words, from unmanageable the situation would have reached the point of absurdity.

260. As it is, delegations, especially the smaller ones (which at the twenty-fifth session of the General Assembly made up at least one third of the total membership of the Organization), find it impossible to "digest" more than a fraction of the documentation they receive. During Assembly sessions their difficulties are greatly aggravated since roughly 80 per cent of the documents are issued so late that they can do no more than skim through them before decisions are taken.

261. As a result, the examination of many items on the agenda becomes more and more perfunctory and less and less productive of constructive results; the human and material resources invested in the production of this documentation - often at the cost of other, more fruitful activities - are increasingly squandered; and, last but not least, the machinery of the United Nations gets clogged up, its financial resources are put to additional strain and its effectiveness is impaired.

262. The Inspectors were struck by the fact that even though all this is well-known to Secretariat and Member States alike - General Assembly Resolution 2609 (XXIV), which is the raison d'être of this study, is in itself a token of this abiding concern - neither the Secretariat nor the Member States seem as yet prepared to exercise the restraint and discipline which alone can arrest, if not reverse the trend.

263. In paragraph 2 of its Resolution 2538 (XXIV) the General Assembly, referring to various earlier recommendations and suggestions to this effect, requested the Secretary-General "to implement as quickly as possible those recommendations and suggestions that fall within his competence and authority and to continue his efforts to reduce documentation". The Secretary-General in his latest report (A/8126) assured the Assembly that "the Secretary-General has, in the light of his own comments and those of the Advisory Committee on the recommendations and suggestions referred to,

continued to implement as quickly as possible those recommendations and suggestions that fall within his competence to reduce documentation and achieve economies wherever possible without detriment to the work of the Organization".

264. As this study shows, however, it is clear that many of the above-mentioned recommendations and suggestions remain to this day a dead letter. Whether it be a matter of enforcing stricter drafting standards or streamlining editing procedures, or scrapping out-dated or superfluous documents, or taking, generally, the steps needed to ensure that delegations be provided with the type of practical, action-oriented document they need most at the time they need it, or whether it be a matter of reorganizing the whole system of internal documents control to ensure that these and the Assembly's many other past recommendations and suggestions are at last carried out, the Inspectors feel (as does the ACABQ) that there is at the Secretariat level room for considerable improvement. Moreover, many of these improvements require no additional authority on the part of the Assembly.

265. In its comments on the Secretary-General's last report on the subject of documentation, the ACABQ remarks: "One fact which clearly emerges from the report .. is that the wishes expressed by the General Assembly last year in Resolution 2538 (XXIV) have, all too often, not been heeded by other organs ... In the circumstances, it is clearly unrealistic to expect any marked improvement in the overall problem of documentation, unless there is a more consistent approach to it in all the intergovernmental organs concerned" (A/8212).

266. The Inspectors, in this study, have pinpointed and analyzed several instances (for instance, the "cumulative" format of certain reports, the duplication of reports on identical subjects by several bodies, the too frequent issuance of certain documents, the continuing use by too many bodies of the more expensive type of records, etc.) which substantiate the ACABQ's warning. They hope, therefore, that Member States will in their turn pay greater heed to the Assembly's past recommendations and suggestions and exercise the restraint, both as regards the initiation of activities and the call for documentation, without which all the Secretariat's efforts are doomed to frustration.

267. Their conviction that given the will in all quarters to do so, the situation can be radically improved is reinforced when they note that the same problem, if on

a smaller scale, has been faced at one point or another by many other organizations of the United Nations system and tackled with appreciably greater success than in the United Nations, thanks to restraint, self-discipline and watchful control over the follow-up of decisions by Member States and secretariats alike.

268. It is to the concrete means of control that the Inspectors will now address themselves:

269. As pointed out in paragraphs 40 to 60, they believe that this control is in the first place a matter of substantive control over a document's format and content and that such control can only be exercised effectively at the level of the author-Department, both as regards the documents which originate in the Department and those requested by organs serviced by it.

270. They also believe, however, after considering the repeated and to date, by and large unsuccessful efforts to limit documentation, that more drastic measures are now required and that the only practical way of obtaining acceptable results is to apply a departmental quota system, reviewed and formally approved each year by the General Assembly, coupled with detailed and systematic accounting in the budget documents, such as that which has been adopted by two of the larger specialized agencies - UNESCO and FAO.

271. In their first report (A/7576) the Inspectors stressed the importance of including in the budget estimates separate and comprehensive information about the volume and cost (including approximate authors' costs) of documents and publications. This is now being done only in respect of publications and the Inspectors have been informed that it cannot be done in the case of documentation, the cost of which is spread out under various sections of the budget. As for the volume of documentation, it is allegedly available 'upon request', to be provided "as required".

272. The Inspectors have now extensive experience of the records of OCS, which are indeed comprehensive and increasingly sophisticated, and are no doubt appropriate to the present requirements of OCS. However they have learnt from this experience that although the staff of Documents Control are both able and dedicated, it is sometimes impossible to retrieve at short notice the type of data which effective control over the volume of documentation, as suggested in this report, implies, no doubt because such control on a continuing basis is a thing as yet unknown in the United Nations.

As a result, the Inspectors themselves had for months on end to collate the information and compute and analyse the required data virtually from scratch. This in itself, in their belief, highlights the need for control of this volume of documentation on a continuing institutionalized footing.

273. For that very reason, they also feel that they should insist on the need for a comprehensive breakdown of cost figures as suggested in paragraphs 14-23, 56 and 271. Moreover they are convinced, in the light of the experience of the above-mentioned agencies (see Annexes III and IV), that, given the will to do so, this can be done also in the United Nations.

274. What does this mean in practice? In UNESCO, commencing with the 1959-1960 biennium, costs for documents and publications services were distributed among the various appropriation lines in the budget on the basis of the anticipated workload sector by sector. At the same time the appropriation resolution for 1959-1960 and succeeding biennia authorized the Director-General to make transfers between appropriation lines in respect of documents and publications services on the basis of actual needs in order to give him flexibility in ensuring that these services were used efficiently and economically.

275. At first, certain difficulties were encountered in applying this system. In 1968 the Director-General set up a Committee of Experts to study the question of documents and publications services with a view to improving their planning, budgeting and control and making them more responsive to the needs of the Organization. The Committee recommended that the budget for documents and publications services be presented in a single appropriation line and that it should be a realistic reflection of a plan. Such a presentation was to have the effect of establishing a ceiling for these services and result in a reduced demand. As a further instrument of control, the Committee recommended that a quota system be established in order to ensure that documents and publications services were apportioned more equitably among the user Departments. These recommendations were implemented in the approved Programme and Budget for 1969-1970 and have been maintained for the following biennium. As a result, each sector of the Organization is given a quota, in terms of standard pages, and for each language, for (a) documents, (b) publications and (c) periodicals. There are separate quotas for (a) translation, (b) composition, (c) internal printing, and (d) copy preparation, art work and proofreading (see Annex III). The information available to the Inspectors suggests that the UNESCO quota system is working well.

276. As regards FAO, the Programme of Work and Approved Budget has, since 1960, contained a table entitled "Total Document Funds by User Chapters". Since the 1968-1969 biennium a further refinement has been introduced whereby, in addition to the aforementioned table, the budget document contains a breakdown of the allocations for documents expressed in page impressions, words for translation, etc. (see Annex IV). The Inspectors have been informed that the expression of allocations in terms of work units as well as dollars has helped very much to strengthen controls.

277. It is evident that the introduction of a quota system for documents and publications will be facilitated when all the UN organizations adopt programme budgeting. Under such a system the costs will automatically be distributed under the various programme and sub-programme headings. However the Inspectors do not believe that it is necessary to await the introduction of a full programme budgeting system to apply measures similar to those employed to the complete satisfaction by UNESCO and FAO, neither of which foresee any special difficulties with the advent of programme budgeting.

278. As can be seen from Annex V, the adoption of the Inspectors' recommendations as applied to seven of the documents (or documents series) which they have analyzed in detail in this report would in 1970 have resulted in a savings of roughly 58 per cent in terms of pages and of 32 per cent in terms of page-units. Moreover, only in one case (the delegation letters in the S/... series) do these recommendations imply the complete elimination of a document; in all others, the basic information contained in the documents would remain available in one form or another.

279. In the light of the foregoing considerations the Inspectors are convinced that it is possible to make an immediate across-the-board reduction in United Nations documentation of at least 15 per cent by the sole authority of the Secretary-General, without additional instructions to this effect by the General Assembly. This means in terms of pages a reduction from some 868,000 to 740,000, in terms of page-units from some 500 million to 425 million, and in terms of cost savings - both direct and indirect - of about \$4.5 million for the first year. It goes without saying that this figure of at least 15 per cent represents an overall target and not a uniform reduction goal for each individual document or category of documents.

280. This, however, should be regarded merely as a first, emergency measure, which must be followed at reasonable intervals (say every two or three years) by a further in-depth examination of the problem by such a body as the General Assembly may wish to designate, the ultimate goal of these exercises being to reduce the overall volume by 50 per cent as compared to the 1970 figure.

281. However, any steps taken for the reduction of the volume of documentation are unlikely to be effective unless there is a concomitant reduction in the number of meetings and conferences held under the auspices of the United Nations.

282. In Section XVIII which follows, the Inspectors summarize their main recommendations, dividing them into two categories: (i) those in regard to which the initiative rests essentially with the General Assembly; (ii) those which, in their judgement, can be implemented by the Secretary-General without specific authorization by the General Assembly. Other suggestions have been made; if they do not appear in Section XVIII it is because the Inspectors prefer not to obscure their main recommendations.

283. These suggestions are to be found in paragraphs 54-56, 57, 196, 163, 179-80, 182, 189, 191, 190-192, 195, 201-202, 206, 219-220, 236-237, 264 and 266 of the main body of Part A of this report.

PART A

IX Summary of Main Recommendations<sup>24/</sup>

Recommendations which require a decision by the General Assembly

Recommendation 1: As an initial step towards a rationalization of United Nations documentation, its volume, as computed for 1970, should be reduced by at least 15 per cent, it being understood that this figure represents an overall target and not a uniform reduction to be applied to each individual document or group of documents (paragraph 279);

Recommendation 2: To ensure that such an objective is attained, the United Nations should introduce a documents quota system along the lines of that which has been adopted in certain other organizations of the United Nations system (paragraphs 270-277);

Recommendation 3: A further study of United Nations documentation should be made at two- or three-yearly intervals with a view to assessing results achieved and setting new targets which would ultimately lead to a 50 per cent reduction in documentation as compared to 1970, this ceiling being maintained until the General Assembly decides otherwise (paragraph 280);

Recommendation 4: All estimates of the cost of documentation should include the cost of drafting, editing, translation, typing, reproduction and distribution (paragraphs 14-23, 56, 271, 273-277);

Recommendation 5: A list should be drawn up by the Secretary-General of all basic documents whose issuance prior to the start of a session of the General Assembly should be mandatory and no item of the agenda should be discussed unless this basic documentation had been made available before the start of the session (paragraphs 190-192, 196);

Recommendation 6: Pursuant to the decisions taken by the Economic and Social Council at its forty-seventh and forty-ninth sessions the Secretary-General should be invited to prepare a list of reports which could be submitted to the General Assembly at two- or three-yearly intervals, it being understood that such reports would be automatically included in the list of those whose issuance prior to the start of the relevant General Assembly session would be mandatory (paragraphs 207-214);

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<sup>24/</sup> The recommendations to part "B" of this report are to be found on pages 118 to 120.

Recommendation 7: Delegation requests for participation in the proceedings of the Security Council without the right of vote should not be issued in the S/... series but should continue to be reflected in the verbatim record and contained in the Council's annual report to the General Assembly (paragraph 135);

Recommendation 8: The reports of all subsidiary bodies should observe the basic criteria laid down in paragraph 27 (a) and (g) of the report of the Committee on the Control of Documentation (A/3888), as endorsed by General Assembly resolution 1272 (XIII). To this end, they should be limited to a description of the work done by that body (and by its own subsidiary bodies, if any), the conclusions it arrived at, the decisions it took, any proposals made for decision by the General Assembly, its proposed work programme, its membership and its Documents List. No part of any working paper used by the body in the course of its work, and no extraneous material (such as letters, resolutions or reports of third parties) should be appended, reproduced or quoted in the report, all such material being merely referred to where necessary (paragraphs 77-87, 164);

Recommendation 9: Analytical summaries of Government replies to questionnaires should, to the extent possible, be prepared by the Secretariat and be circulated in the "General" series in the working languages, the complete replies in such cases being issued as conference room papers in the original language only (paragraphs 69, 72-76);

Recommendation 10: (a) The full periodic reports to the Commission on Human Rights should be reproduced as CRP's in the original language only; their analytical summary should continue to be reproduced in four languages in the "General" series; the country and subject indexes should be dispensed with; (b) the "General" distribution of documentation of the Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities should be limited to the Draft Report and the Final Report (paragraphs 69, 72-76);

Recommendation 11: Petitions should be grouped, those which come in after the time-limit being deferred until the next session of the body concerned (paragraph 87);

Recommendation 12: Documents should be distributed in their various language versions as and when they become available, it being understood that no document would be discussed in Committee until all working language versions were available (paragraphs 183-187);

Recommendation 13: The General Assembly should arrange for a special study of ways and means of rationalizing the programme of conferences and meetings. In the meantime:

- (a) the recommendation of the Committee of Fourteen<sup>25/</sup> which provided for
- (i) a special line in the budget showing the expenditure directly attributable to conferences and meetings, and (ii) an annex to the budget containing an estimate of the total expenditure pertaining directly and indirectly to these activities, should be implemented forthwith;
  - (b) all subsidiary bodies should be requested to observe strictly rule 154 of the rules of procedure;
  - (c) when approving the programme of conferences and meetings, the General Assembly should at the same time approve the budgetary appropriations for the conferences and meetings;
  - (d) the dates and place of scheduled conferences and meetings should not be changed if the change involves any increase in the expenditure approved by the General Assembly

(paragraphs 248-258).

Recommendations which can be implemented by the Secretary-General without specific authorization by the General Assembly

Recommendation 14: (i) The adoption of uniform statistical criteria as regards documentation and meetings, similarly applicable at Headquarters, the Geneva Office, the regional economic commissions and in all other bodies which are covered by the United Nations budget should be accelerated with a view to facilitating review and control by Member States; (ii) the statistical records of Documents Control should include for each Committee of the General Assembly and for the Assembly as a whole, data on the number, length and date of issuance of all "pre-session" documents, whatever their symbol (paragraphs 8-13);

Recommendation 15: Departments and Divisions should be apprised no later than 15 January of their respective responsibilities arising from the decisions taken at the previous session of the General Assembly; questionnaires, if any, should be sent out no later than 31 January; consultations with other bodies should likewise be initiated no later than 31 January; the List of Items proposed for Inclusion in the Provisional Agenda (in 1970: OR 421 (1) twenty-fifth) should be forwarded to the various Departments for comment no later than 15 May (paragraphs 165-176);

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<sup>25/</sup> A/6343 paragraph 104 (d).

Recommendation 16: The cut-off date for replies of governments to questionnaires should be set at the latest at 30 June. These replies should be grouped in a single document to be issued prior to the start of the Assembly's session; subsequent replies should be issued in a single addendum prior to the start of work of the Committee concerned (paragraphs 172-175);

Recommendation 17: Within their allocated quotas, Departments should be given exclusive responsibility for: (i) the substantive control of their documentation (format, length, content, source-work, referencing, etc.) and (ii) the editing of all in-session documents of the bodies they service (CRP's, draft resolutions, etc.) (paragraphs 40-60, 101-102, 108-128);

Recommendation 18: The drafting criteria laid down by the General Assembly in its resolutions 1272 (XIII), 2292 (XXII) and 2538 (XXIV) should be strictly enforced (paragraphs 69-100, 129-134);

Recommendation 19: The uniform standards for reports of the Main Committees to the General Assembly set forth in Editorial Directive ST/CS/SER.A/9 should henceforth be strictly observed (paragraphs 95-100);

Recommendation 20: The format and content of the Secretary-General's Annual Report to the General Assembly should be re-considered (paragraphs 88-90);

Recommendation 21: Consideration should likewise be given to ways of **bringing the** Report of the Economic and Social Council into closer conformity with the standards set by the General Assembly in Resolution 1272 (XIII) and the Council's own decisions so that it provides a clear and succinct account of the Council's work, and singles out what action is required of the General Assembly on any given item (paragraphs 91-94);

Recommendation 22: In line with the repeated exhortations of the General Assembly and of the Economic and Social Council, summaries should be prepared of the more technical or otherwise complicated reports, and a clear indication should be given therein of what kind of action is required on them by the General Assembly or the Council (paragraphs 103-107);

Recommendation 23: The information document circulated to delegates regarding present documentation policies in the United Nations (document L/INF/136 or its successors) should include annually updated indications of the present volume and cost of documentation (paragraphs 60, 350); (see also part "B", recommendation 12 (a))

Recommendation 24: Every United Nations document should carry on the cover-page the following reminder:

For reasons of economy, this document is printed in a limited number of copies. Delegates and observers are kindly requested not to mislay their copy and not to request additional copies.

(paragraphs 221-224);

Recommendation 25: The distribution pattern of Administrative Instructions, Information Circulars, etc. should be re-examined with a view to limiting such distribution to those whom they directly concern (paragraphs 226-227);

Recommendation 26: The delayed secondary distribution of press releases to delegations and Secretariat should be discontinued (paragraphs 238-245).

## B. ORGANIZATION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S PROCEEDINGS

### 1. General Comments

284. The problems connected with the proceedings of the General Assembly, its organization and its method of work, have been studied on a number of occasions by various reviewing bodies appointed by the Assembly itself. The earliest was the Committee on Procedure and Organization established in 1946 under resolution 102(1); the latest the Ad Hoc Committee on the Improvement of the Methods of work of the General Assembly, the recommendations of which represented the most far-reaching attempt to date to rationalize these proceedings and provided the basis for General Assembly resolution 1898 (XVIII), dated 11 November 1963.

285. The proceedings of the Assembly are governed on the one hand by its Rules of Procedure, first approved in 1946 and revised in 1950, 1951, 1954, 1956, 1957, 1961, 1964, 1966, 1968 and 1969 and on the other by a series of resolutions of the General Assembly adopted in 1949, 1952, 1954 and 1963 which, while not amounting to formal amendments of the Rules of Procedure, have the force and authority of the latter as applied to the conduct of the proceedings of the Assembly and its main Committees. While most of the changes were structural (the composition of the General Committee, the increase in the membership of the ACABQ, etc.) others were concerned with the rationalization of procedures of meetings of the General Assembly.

286. This goes to show that the Rules themselves have never been regarded as immutable. Indeed, improvement of the proceedings of the Assembly has been a matter of concern to Member States from the first and at the twenty-fifth session there was renewed insistence on the need for a critical examination of the Assembly's rules in the light of accumulated experience, the Organization's expanding membership and its widening or evolving scope of activities in a changing world.

287. In their search for possibilities of improvement, the Inspectors have constantly borne in mind the particular nature of the United Nations as the sole near-universal forum in which the representatives of States can meet as equals to state their official positions, discuss their own problems as they relate to the issues of peace and the well-being of mankind, establish personal contact and enjoy the advantages of informal discussion and negotiation on international problems. Clearly, it would not be realistic to try to apply to such an organization standards of procedure that

might be applicable elsewhere, nor is it to be expected that a mere change of methods of work will overcome all difficulties.

288. Any improvement in the machinery for international political and economic co-operation is the responsibility of the Member States and depends on their willingness and readiness to co-operate in the common interest on a mutually acceptable basis.

289. Nevertheless, in the course of their study and as a result of their conversations with delegates and senior representatives of the Secretariat, the Inspectors found that significant improvements could in most cases be achieved essentially by refining existing procedures or merely by putting into effect the Assembly's own past recommendations.

## II. The Agenda of the General Assembly

290. The agenda of the General Assembly, as at present constituted, represents on account of its length alone a serious obstacle to a rationalization of the Assembly's proceedings. Moreover, many of the political, economic and social questions which it encompasses are so complex that it is increasingly clear that the Assembly cannot, within the time available to it at its annual regular sessions, examine all of the items brought to its attention with the thoroughness these require.

291. The items to be included on the agenda should therefore be selected with great care so that the attention of the Assembly will not be diverted from its main or more urgent tasks by issues which, however important, have nevertheless a lower priority or can be better examined in the first instance in one of the growing number of subsidiary bodies.

292. In the opinion of the Inspectors, however, as with documentation, many of the difficulties stem not so much from political considerations as from a routine and in some cases unimaginative approach to the Assembly's methods of work. Indeed some of them could, in their judgement, be corrected by merely reverting to past Assembly practices, disregard for which has contributed significantly to the lengthening of the agenda and, consequently, of the Assembly sessions.

293. For instance, the agendas of recent sessions have been often overburdened with items which, though undoubtedly of interest to Member States at the time they were first included, have over the years yielded priority to more topical issues. And yet, even though no new, original elements have emerged and though these items are now, therefore, often merely of a formal or informational nature, they are automatically carried over from one session to the next and discussed again and again in a routine but nevertheless time-consuming manner (Examples: "The Role of the United Nations in Training National Technical Personnel for the Accelerated Industrialization of the Developing Countries", "United Nations International School" and "Housing, Building and Planning").

294. The situation is aggravated by the practice of including on the agenda items which are patently not yet ripe for discussion by the Assembly. Being in no position to examine such items thoroughly or indeed not being even expected to do so, the Assembly confines itself to taking note of them or deferring consideration until a

subsequent session, without any assurance that the items will be any riper for discussion even then. Meanwhile, however, at least some time will have been spent in fruitless preliminary discussion. (Examples: "Amendment to Article 22 of the Statute of the International Court of Justice and Consequential Amendments to Articles 23 and 28", "Declaration on Universal Participation in the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties", "Need to Consider Suggestions Regarding the Review of the Charter of the United Nations" and "Town Twinning as a Means of International Co-operation").

295. Other items, most of them new ones, are included in the agenda even though they clearly require prior consideration by some other body before coming up for discussion at the highest level. (Examples: "Question of the Elderly and the Aged" and "Permanent Sovereignty over Natural Resources").

296. Alongside the increasing importance of problems of international peace and security, economic and social activities have come to account in recent years for a growing share of the Organization's work. This does not mean, however, that all economic and social issues, however topical, must necessarily be placed immediately on the Assembly's agenda; many of them should be dealt with first and in depth by the Economic and Social Council or one of its subsidiary bodies. (Examples: "Questions of the Elderly and the Aged", "Permanent Sovereignty over Natural Resources" and "Status of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights").

297. On more than one occasion the Assembly has adopted resolutions which invited its subsidiary bodies to reconsider those decisions that called for the submission of periodic reports to it or involved the automatic inclusion of items on the Assembly's agenda. The Inspectors note with regret that none of these bodies has as yet seen fit to do so.

298. Some closely related issues, instead of being allocated to a single Committee, or to a joint session of two or more Committees, continue to be discussed separately in several Committees. (Examples: Apartheid and Racial Discrimination in the Special Political, Third and Fourth Committees; Disarmament and Sea and Sea Bed in the First and Second).

299. Last but not least, a number of items relating to one and the same subject or to different aspects of a subject figure individually on the Assembly's agenda, and are then examined individually in Committee. The Inspectors feel that efforts should be made to group such items together in order to reduce the length of the Committees' agendas and help speed up their proceedings. For instance, the items on the agenda of the Second Committee could be grouped under the general headings "Economic Development and Technical Co-operation", "Problems of Science and Technology", etc. Many items on the agenda of the Third Committee could be grouped under the single heading of "Report of the Economic and Social Council". All items on the agenda of the Fourth Committee could fall under the single heading: "Problems of Decolonization and Eradication of All Forms of Colonialism". Almost all items on the agenda of the Fifth Committee are directly or indirectly linked to the Budget; they could thus easily be grouped under two headings: those relating to the Budget proper, and the rest relating to other administrative problems.

300. Though in the First Committee, for one, a practice has been introduced and has proven effective, whereby a single debate is held on such kindred items and individual resolutions are then adopted on each of them, the Inspectors wonder whether any administrative solution can be devised for this purely political problem. But in most other cases the time has clearly come for the Member States to assume direct responsibility for the contents of the Assembly's agenda and specifically for the elimination of such items as (i) have lost their urgency or relevance; (ii) are not ripe for discussion; or (iii) could be dealt with and even disposed of equally well, and perhaps even better, by subsidiary bodies of the Assembly.

301. In a report to the twenty-third session on the organization of its work at future sessions (A/7426), the Second Committee suggested inter alia that the Secretary-General review existing resolutions and make recommendations as to whether the interval between reports to the General Assembly should be extended or whether some of them should be dispensed with altogether in the light of the current circumstances. At its twenty-fourth session, the General Assembly followed up this suggestion with a request to the Secretary-General that he submit to the twenty-fifth session a list of those resolutions which were of a recurrent nature. This list is still pending and has now been promised for the twenty-sixth session.

302. In this connexion, thought might be given to setting up in each of the Main Committees of the General Assembly a working group which would prepare before the session ended a list of those recurrent items which it would wish to see included in the agenda of the following session; after the parent Committee's approval, the list would go to the General Committee, which would make before the session ended consolidated recommendations to the Assembly. The other items would either be deferred sine die, until new elements justified their revival, or they would be taken up at bi- or even tri-ennial intervals. The same could be done by other bodies such as the Economic and Social Council, UNCTAD, the regional economic commissions and the functional commissions.

303. In the same report, the Second Committee placed emphasis on the fact that technical proposals should be raised first in the Economic and Social Council and in other appropriate bodies and that reports to the Assembly should not be automatically called for on such questions; any delegation which considered that the examination of these items in the Council or in another body had been inadequate or that further problems had arisen requiring Assembly action, could raise the issue in connexion with the reports of these bodies, without the items having to appear separately on the Assembly's agenda.

304. The Inspectors endorse this suggestion; indeed they would go even further. As a general rule, they feel that many economic, social and human rights items could be examined by the Assembly not yearly, but every two years. They have all the less hesitation in saying this, inasmuch as experience has shown that such items take at least two to three years to pass through the various bodies which are called upon to work on them, before they are mature for Assembly consideration. It is relevant in this connexion to note that most of the subsidiary bodies are reverting to biennial sessions. Such a development would, they realize, involve a review of the programme of the Economic and Social Council, but the latter has never been immutable and it is quite logical that it should continue to adapt itself to the changing situation.

305. Until about 1954 the report of the Economic and Social Council was regarded as one of the main items on the agenda of the Second and Third Committees and during its discussion representatives felt free to express their views and submit proposals on

the entire United Nations programme in the economic, social and human rights fields, the only exception being the report of the High Commissioner for Refugees, which has always been a separate item on the agenda.

306. In subsequent years, however, less and less attention has come to be given to the Council's report, particularly in the Third Committee, which during the period 1964-1968 was busy drafting a series of conventions. This has engendered the belief that unless they appear on the Assembly's agenda as separate items, the issues dealt with in the Council's report are not likely to receive proper attention. As a result, the agenda of the Assembly has grown longer and longer and its contents in these fields duplicate more and more the contents of the Council's report. This has been matched by a proliferation of debates and of the documentation provided for them, and of Assembly resolutions as well, since the very appearance of an item on the Assembly's agenda suffices to generate a debate and a resolution, even if the latter merely takes note of the relevant document or defers the item until a subsequent session. The Council's report, for its part, is barely used or referred to by delegates in these discussions, its place being taken by the notes with which the Secretary-General introduces the various items.

307. There are two possible alternative remedies to this impractical procedure: (i) a return to the former practice, whereby issues dealt with in the Council's report would not figure automatically as separate items on the Assembly's agenda unless the Assembly so decided; and (ii) a reconsideration of the contents of the Council's report, whereby it would, instead of giving a comprehensive account of all the Council's activities, contain merely an account of the Council's work, as well as separate reports on those items which the Council regarded as ripe for Assembly review and decision.

308. There is little doubt that either formula would greatly reduce the number of debates on individual items, save much time and cut down the number of Assembly resolutions.

### III. The Work Programme of the Session

309. The Inspectors were immediately struck by the fact that unlike most of the specialized agencies they have studied, the General Assembly works according to no pre-set programme or time-table. The only information communicated to Member States in this connexion consists of the Provisional Agenda (which, under rule 13, must be circulated to them at least sixty days prior to the start of each session), as well as a couple of memoranda containing more or less general information issued by the Under-Secretary-General in Charge of General Assembly Affairs on the very eve of the session. As a result, until their delegations arrive in New York and even for some time thereafter, Governments have not the slightest idea, for example, how long the general debate will last, when the Main Committees will start work, when they will complete it, when the various items on the agenda will come up for discussion and how long these discussions are expected to last. True, once the session has started, additional information is provided by some of the Main Committees' respective secretariats, but this information, (usually described as the Committee's "agenda" or "organization of work") is of very uneven quality and content. Some of them mention a tentative date for the conclusion of the Committee's work, and contain a provisional week-by-week time-table. Some provide information on the consideration of the recurrent items at previous sessions. Some are accompanied by a list of documents which have been or are to be circulated. Some even give the scheduled dates for the circulation of these documents. In some cases, however, the secretariats limit themselves to a covering letter from the President of the General Assembly to the Chairman, accompanying the list of items referred by the General Committee to the Committee in question.

310. A serious consequence of all this is that Governments cannot plan in advance with any degree of accuracy the arrival in New York and stay there of the high-level representatives who may wish to participate at a given stage of the proceedings; moreover many Government experts, whose services are often sorely needed at home, must waste time in New York, at considerable expense, until the items with which they are particularly concerned come up for discussion. In paragraphs 360-387 the Inspectors will go in detail into the question of the loss of time at Assembly sessions. Here, they will merely point out that the late start of some of the Committees' work is undoubtedly due to the absence of a pre-set work-programme. At the twenty-fifth

session, for instance, the Third Committee devoted four meetings (almost four work days) to the discussion of its programme. Admittedly, this debate was substantive rather than procedural, but it could, perhaps, have been shorter, had the whole procedure for the inclusion of items on the Assembly's agenda - or their postponement - been less haphazard than it seems to be at present and had programming techniques been more refined than they are. More generally, however, Assembly sessions are still marked, twenty-five years after the birth of the Organization, by a degree of improvisation that would be unthinkable in any of the specialized agencies; this strikes the Inspectors as inadmissible, considering the amount of work the Assembly is supposed to do in the relatively short time at its disposal.

311. It has been argued that the main difficulty in drawing up a detailed work-programme in advance is that the final agenda is known only once it has been approved by the General Committee at the start of, and sometimes even well into, the session. It is also argued that in the light of past experience, both Secretariat and Member States have a fairly accurate idea of what the overall time-table will be. While the Inspectors cannot help feeling that the second argument cancels out the first, they note that well over 80 per cent of the Assembly's agenda in past years has been made up of recurrent items which, as matters stand (and though on that, too, the Inspectors have some suggestions to make), are included in the agenda by the General Committee virtually as a matter of course. As regards at least 80 per cent of the items, therefore, the Secretariat can easily prepare a draft work-programme which is unlikely to undergo many changes at the hands of the Assembly. Moreover, it can do so without changing the Rules of Procedure.

312. The Inspectors recommend, therefore, that such a work-programme be prepared by the Secretariat on the basis of the provisional agenda and that it be circulated at least thirty days prior to the opening date of the session. This programme should include a detailed week-by-week time-table in consolidated chart-form for the consideration in plenary and in committee of the various items on the provisional agenda, together with suggested closing-dates for the general debate and for the work of the Main Committees.

#### IV. The General Debate

##### (a) In Plenary

313. The value of the general debate in plenary meetings of the General Assembly is beyond doubt. For that very reason, however, this debate should be organized in such a manner as to enable the top-level representatives of Member States who participate in it and who can, needless to say, spend but a short time in New York, to do so. All past reviewing bodies have stressed that it should also be reasonably brief.

314. The Inspectors note with satisfaction that the organization of the general debate in plenary has improved over the years and that following the sharp increase which occurred between the tenth and seventeenth sessions, the number of meetings devoted to it has been if not reduced, at least stabilized. Thus, though the membership of the Organization has increased since the seventeenth session from 110 to 127 and the number of speakers - from 91 to 112 (at the twenty-fourth session), the number of plenary meetings devoted to the general debate has not exceeded thirty, i.e. roughly the same as seven years ago. Though individual statements have been known to take up to 90 minutes, their average length has tended to be stabilized in recent years - 34 minutes at the twenty-fifth session, as compared to 35 at the twenty-fourth and 36 at the twenty-third. These figures, however, are somewhat misleading unless broken down into two groups: those who speak less than or up to the average (forty at the twenty-fifth session, as compared to sixty-one at the twenty-fourth and fifty-six at the twenty-third) and those who speak longer than the average (thirty at the twenty-fifth session, as compared to fifty-one at the twenty-fourth and fifty-three at the twenty-third). In connexion with these comparisons, however, it should be recalled that the twenty-fifth session was a Commemorative Session and that a second general debate was held on that occasion.

315. Although most specialized agencies have adopted a time-limit for speeches in the general debate,<sup>26/</sup> the Inspectors, mindful of the somewhat special nature of this debate in the United Nations, and of the importance of high-level participation in it, hesitate to recommend a rigidly-enforced time-limit for it. They suggest, nevertheless, that the President might, at the start of the debate, invite delegates not to exceed, say, 30 minutes, and 10 minutes in the case of the right of reply.

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<sup>26/</sup> ILO - 15 minutes; UNESCO - 20, WHO - 10. This time-limit is rigidly enforced by light-signals, bells, the break-off of simultaneous interpretation, etc.

316. The time devoted to the general debate in plenary could also be reduced further through a better organization of this debate. The Inspectors were struck by the fact, for instance, that statements are distributed very unevenly over the total number of meetings - from one or two speakers during the first days of the session to five or six, or even seven towards the end. Had an average of five speakers taken the floor at each plenary meeting of the twenty-fifth session the duration of the general debate would have been cut from seventeen meetings to thirteen.

317. Delegations avail themselves far too freely of their courtesy-right to state - and change, often at the last minute - their "convenient" or "preferred" time, though such changes should be made only in exceptional circumstances. Nor, more often than not, is the President informed of the proposed length of a statement. This makes it virtually impossible for him to plan and time the general debate with any degree of accuracy.

318. Lastly, the fact that no date is set for the conclusion of the general debate likewise makes it difficult for delegations to plan the timing of their statements and hence also the time of arrival of their high-ranking representatives in New York and the duration of the latter's stay there.

319. That planning is desirable is beyond doubt. That it is possible can be seen not only from the practice now in force in most of the larger specialized agencies, but also from the experience of the General Assembly's own twenty-fifth Commemorative Session. There, eighty-six Heads of State or of Government or other high-ranking dignitaries took the floor. And yet the session required only seventeen meetings, i.e. an average of five speakers per meeting - precisely because a definite time-limit had been set, the length of each statement had been communicated in advance and both President and delegations could plan accordingly.

320. An ancillary benefit from a further shortening of the general debate would be that the plenary hall would become available sooner for Main Committee meetings. At present, only six Committee meetings of the whole can be held simultaneously, so that whenever there is a plenary meeting, one Committee is forced to remain idle. The shortening of the general debate would thus contribute to shortening the session. The savings thus incurred would exceed the cost of the additional meetings services required to hold seven committee meetings daily instead of six.

321. The Inspectors hope, therefore, that the practice introduced in the General Assembly at the Commemorative Session will in future be extended to all regular sessions and that, in the light of the suggested ratio of five speakers per plenary meeting, a tentative closing date for the general debate will be included in the sessional work-programme outlined by them in paragraphs 309 - 312.

(b) In Committee

322. In the Main Committees substantive debates on a multitude of items contribute greatly to the dragging out of the Committees' work, and hence of the session generally. In principle, delegates may now address themselves to the substance of an item half-a-dozen or more times - during the general debate, when introducing or discussing resolutions and amendments, during the exercise of their right of reply or counter-reply, while explaining their vote, when discussing or approving the Committee's report and again later, in plenary. As a result, each Committee has often the time to discuss in depth only a fraction of the items on its agenda and not necessarily the most urgent or ripe items.

323. This is due, in the first place, to the afore-mentioned lack of an overall work-programme for the session, but also to the fact that the Committees do not either all work according to a strict time-table, their only guideline being in such cases the suggested closing-date of the Assembly - a flexible concept, as past experience has shown. Moreover even when a time-table exists, it is frequently disregarded. At the twenty-fifth session, for instance, three of the seven Main Committees had no time-table. As a result, in the early weeks of the session the Committees' pace is often leisurely, gathering momentum as the session proceeds, with night and Saturday meetings as the ultimate device if and when the situation gets thoroughly out of hand.

324. The Inspectors are, of course, aware of the fact that repetitive debates are still frequently regarded as one way of giving prominence to an issue and that the dragging out of a discussion is sometimes used for informal group consultations, which are often the best way of achieving a consensus. But they cannot help feeling that all too often political or tactical considerations are read into what is essentially a matter of poor organization or plain lack of discipline.

325. As mentioned in paragraph 300, the First Committee has successfully resorted to one general debate on a group of related items and individual resolutions. Elsewhere, however, this practice still encounters resistance. On the other hand, the holding of

joint sessions of two or more Committees to which related items are allocated, which was fairly current in the early years of the Assembly, has unfortunately fallen into disuse.

326. The Inspectors are convinced that in many cases it would be possible after appropriate consultations, to decide before the Committee in question starts work, those items which can be grouped and those which call for separate examination. Ideally, in all Main Committees with the exception of the First and the Special Political Committees, substantive discussions should be centered on the relevant draft resolutions. This is especially true of recurrent items, which should be debated only if new, original elements are reported by the Secretary-General. The Inspectors also wonder whether the difficulties invoked against joint Committee sessions cannot be overcome, to ensure the avoidance of parallel debates on related items in two or more Committees.

327. The rules limiting the length of statements in the United Nations<sup>28/</sup> are extremely flexible. They merely state that the President (or Chairman) - and in the case of rule 74 [115], the General Assembly itself - "may limit the time" allowed to speakers. As a result, there exist not only innumerable opportunities for delegates to address themselves to the substance of an item, but unless a Committee decides otherwise they may do so - and often do so - at great length. While the Inspectors realize that the principle of freedom of speech is fundamental to the continuing existence of the United Nations, they consider that unless greater restraint is exercised in this regard, the Organization runs indeed the risk of "drowning in its own words". They would recommend, therefore, that in the Main Committees (again with the exception of the First and Special Political Committees, where the Chairman should merely invite speakers not to exceed 30 minutes), statements should not exceed 15 minutes and all statements in exercise of the right of reply 10 minutes, unless the Committee decides otherwise.

328. Lastly, the Inspectors recommend that the time-table set for each Committee within the context of the overall work-programme of the session (as described in paragraphs 309-312) should be strictly adhered to from the very start of the session, Saturday morning meetings being held if and when the weekly programme has not been completed.

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<sup>28/</sup> Rules 23, 74[115], 75[116], 76[112], 78[119] and 35[108]

V. The Role of the General Committee

329. Under the rules of procedure the General Committee has a number of important functions to perform in organizing and co-ordinating the work of the General Assembly. The General Committee considers the provisional agenda, together with the supplementary and additional lists and makes recommendations to the General Assembly with regard to the inclusion, rejection or deferment of each proposed item (rule 40). It also recommends the closing date of the session (rule 41). It carries a major responsibility for the proceedings of plenary meetings and as regards the work of the Main Committees, it is responsible for the co-ordination of their proceedings and must review their progress and make recommendations for the furthering of such progress (rules 41 and 42).

330. The General Assembly, in its afore-mentioned resolution 1898 (XVIII), dated 11 November 1963, recommended that "the General Committee should fulfil its functions under rules 40, 41 and 42 of the rules of procedure and, in particular, make appropriate recommendations for furthering the progress of the Assembly and its Committees, in such a way as to facilitate the closing of the session by the date fixed; to this end, the General Committee should meet at least once every three weeks". The Inspectors note regretfully that this recommendation remains by and large a dead letter.

331. At the twenty-fifth session the General Committee came in for criticism for the way in which it was going about its work. Some speakers felt that the Committee was handicapped by the fact that its members, being elected only after the start of the session, had but a few days in which to familiarize themselves with and complete their work and that it was, furthermore, hamstrung by the existing rules of procedure. Others maintained that under these rules the Committee had all the authority it needed to play a more active part in steering the General Assembly and improving its methods of work.

332. The Inspectors believe that whatever the short-comings of the rules of procedure, certain organizational measures, coupled with a display of greater initiative by its Chairman and with more assistance from the Secretariat, might enable the General Committee to play a more active role in guiding the Assembly's sessions to a speedier and at the same time more effective conclusion. This is especially true in such matters as the way in which the Committee decides which items should be included in the Assembly's agenda, how and where these should be discussed, and the way in which it co-ordinates the proceedings and reviews the progress of the Main Committees.

(a) Consideration of the Assembly's agenda

333. In order to decide on the appropriateness and timeliness of each agenda item, it is essential that the General Committee have all the relevant information on this item. To date, it is provided with such information only in regard to the supplementary and additional items, not in regard to those items which have been placed on the provisional agenda by the Secretary-General and on which information is limited to reference to the decisions which led to their presence on the lists. All it can do, therefore, is to recommend the inclusion in the agenda of all items which are the subject of an earlier formal decision, whether these items are appropriate or ripe for discussion in the Assembly or not.

334. The Inspectors are, of course, aware of the existence of a yearly OPI publication which provides a great deal of background information on the various items on the agenda. But this unwieldy volume is not structured to serve the purpose the Inspectors have in mind. They would suggest, therefore, that in addition to the provisional agenda prepared by him under rule 13, the Secretary-General issue an annotated agenda with, for each item, a brief statement on:

- (i) the substance of the item, together with a short history indicating how long it has been on the agenda of the General Assembly, how long and for what reasons its consideration has been deferred, which subsidiary body has been considering it and what point has been reached in the consideration of the item;
- (ii) the situation regarding documentation;
- (iii) the kind of action required by the General Assembly (if any), and the degree of urgency of such action.

335. Such an annotated agenda would not only be of great help to the Member States, but with this information at its disposal, the General Committee could be expected, in the light of the general situation, to recommend the inclusion in the agenda of the General Assembly only of those items which urgently require the Assembly's attention and which have been adequately prepared for effective consideration by it at the current session, and to suggest where and when the others should be examined. Lastly, it might render superfluous many of the notes which are prepared by the Secretariat in connexion with the various items on the agenda of the Assembly and its Main Committees, or at least reduce them in number and in length.

(b) Co-ordination of the proceedings and review of the progress of the Main Committees

336. Considerable improvement is also called for - and is perfectly feasible under the existing rules of procedure - in the co-ordinating role of the General Committee over the proceedings of the Main Committees and the review of the progress made by them (as required under rules 41 and 42), as well as in the organisation of the session, generally.

337. At present it exercises no such role. As already pointed out, the only guideline for the Main Committees is the closing date of the session. Within that limitation (which, as we know, is not always respected), the Committees pursue their work without any reference either to the time-tables of the other Committees or to an over-all sessional time-table, for the simple reason that more often as not no such time-tables exist. In cases of concurrent examination of related items by more than one Committee, or when a Committee awaiting the taking up of its report in plenary, has to suspend or postpone its meeting while the reports of other Committees are on the Assembly floor, this is again likely to entail an unnecessary loss of time for Secretariat and delegations alike.

338. In most of the specialised agencies the steering committees meet at least weekly, if not daily, and as a result, their conferences proceed with clockwork precision according to the agreed work-programme. Indeed several of these conferences have succeeded in recent years in significantly shortening their sessions.

339. There is no reason why the General Committee of the United Nations General Assembly should not exercise more effectively its responsibilities in this regard. It needs no additional authority to do so. Rule 42 of the rules of procedure states that "the General Committee shall meet periodically throughout each session to review the progress of the General Assembly and its committees and to make recommendations for furthering such progress". At the twenty-fifth session the Committee met only four times and even then, its concern was directed primarily to agenda matters. Nor do the weekly luncheon meetings between the President, the Secretary-General and the Committee Chairmen seem to be an adequate alternative.

340. The Inspectors recommend that the General Committee should meet at least once a week outside the working hours of the plenary and Main Committees, that it exercise close supervision over the day-to-day progress of the session and the manner in which the Committees conform to their own time-tables within the overall context of the Assembly's, that it plan and schedule additional meetings if and when required and that it act, generally, as the steering body it was set up to be.

341. Needless to say, the existence of an agreed detailed work-programme for the session as a whole and for each of the Main Committees individually, as recommended in paragraphs 309 to 312, constitutes a conditio sine qua non for the effective performance by the General Committee of these functions.

VI. Proceedings and Methods of work of the Main Committees

342. Since, apart from those items which are discussed in plenary meetings without reference to one of the Main Committees (at the twenty-fifth session: 28 out of a total of 101), most of the items on the General Assembly's agenda are examined in Committee, any attempt to rationalise and expedite the Assembly's session must needs start with a look into the methods of work of the Main Committees.

343. In paragraphs 290-308 the Inspectors pointed out that the length and complexity of the Agendas of many Committees contributed to unduly protracted deliberations and often unnecessary discussions. Irrespective of the agenda, however, the Inspectors, on the basis of their own past experience of participation in Assembly sessions and of their observations during the twenty-fifth session, wish to comment at this point on a number of additional contributory factors. As far as they can see, remedial action in many cases depends again not so much on amendment of the existing rules of procedure, as on the more faithful observance of these rules and of past recommendations of the Assembly, as well as on the qualities of the Committee Chairmen, improved planning by the Secretariat and greater discipline in all quarters.

344. The regional groups are playing each year an increasingly positive role in the organization and progress of General Assembly sessions. Prior concordance of the positions of the various countries in each group and between different groups has considerably reduced the number of draft resolutions and formal amendments submitted during the examination of items in the Main Committees and at plenary meetings. It has also speeded up agreement on many items and reduced the amount of time spent on discussion.

345. The Inspectors realize that unanimity within a group or between groups is neither easy, nor in some cases even possible, but they feel that Committee Chairmen should maintain close contact with the various groups with a view to encouraging advance informal agreement, since this contributes decisively to shortening Committee proceedings to a reasonable minimum.

(a) The Role of the Chairman

346. In resolution 1898 (XVIII) the General Assembly described in some detail the responsibilities of Committee Chairmen in accelerating the work of the General Assembly.

347. The role of the Chairmen in organizing and steering the work of the Committees of the Assembly is of crucial importance in determining the successful outcome of the Committees' work. This outcome, as well as the successful organization of the work of

each Committee and the support and co-operation which the Chairman receives from delegations in the performance of his duties, depend as much on his personal calibre, alertness and punctuality as on the manner in which he presides over the Committee's deliberations, as well as the way in which he organizes his contacts and consultations with other delegations, particularly with the chairmen of the regional groups.

348. The General Assembly should ensure the non-recurrence of situations such as that which arose in one of the Committees at the twenty-fifth session, when the Vice-Chairman having departed from New York prior to the closing date of the session, the Chairman left a meeting of the Committee before it had ended and handed over the Chair to the Rapporteur. The right of the Rapporteur to preside over the Committee in the absence of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman was contested under rule 107 of the rules of procedure, and the meeting of the Committee had to be suspended.

349. In view of the exceptionally important part played by the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen in organizing and speeding up the Committees' work, the Inspectors must draw special attention to the responsibility delegations assume in nominating candidates for these offices. In this connexion, they would like to recall the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Improvement of the Methods of work of the General Assembly, to the effect that "special importance should be attributed in the selection of presiding officers to such elements as the previous experience of candidates of the technique of chairmanship or familiarity with the work of the Assembly or of other United Nations bodies" (A/5423, para.40). Lastly, delegations should nominate only candidates who can stay throughout the session.

350. The Inspectors, at the twenty-fifth session, noted that the introductory comments of the Chairmen of the Main Committees varied greatly from one Committee to the next. Some of them addressed themselves solely to substantive issues; some commented also on the organization of the work of the Committee; some spoke solely on the latter subject. Only one of them referred specifically to document A/INF/136, as invited to do in paragraph 41 of the Under-Secretary-General's "Guidelines in the procedure to be followed in matters relating to the General Assembly" (OR 421). The Inspectors feel that this is a serious lapse on the part of the Committee secretariats and that in future the latter should prepare as a matter of course for their respective Chairmen guidelines, which these would be invited to read out at the start of the Committee's work and which would relate to the following subjects:

- \* Punctuality (in this connexion, he might give the figures for the time lost - and cost thereof - at the preceding session);
- \* Time-limit for speeches (including the procedure as regards complimentary statements, tributes, etc., referred to in paragraphs 382-383);
- \* Reference to A/INF/136 or its successors (including specific mention of the volume and cost of documentation, and the number and cost of meetings during the past year);
- \* Reference to the Assembly's decisions re: (i) financial implications; (ii) new conferences and meetings; and (iii) the verbatim reproduction of statements and comments.

351. Though under the rules of procedure the Rapporteur may not preside over Committee meetings even in the absence of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, his competence and experience and the manner in which he interprets and performs his duties likewise affect the speed and quality of the work of the Committee in question. The Inspectors urge, therefore, that due regard be paid to these various factors when nominating candidates to the post of Rapporteur and that the latter take full advantage of the contribution their respective secretariats can bring to the preparation of Committee reports.

(b) The Role of the Secretariat

352. The Inspectors have pointed out elsewhere that one of the most serious organizational flaws in the General Assembly is the lack of a detailed work-programme. This affects the manner in which the respective secretariats prepare the work of the Main Committees. The information provided by them varies both in content and in quality from comprehensive (for instance in the Second, Third and Sixth Committees) to inadequate. Not surprisingly, the orderliness and speed of progress of the Committees' work varies accordingly. It is essential, therefore, that the work-programmes of the Committees be prepared according to certain common minimum standards and that these include, together with the suggested closing-date of the Committee's work, a detailed provisional week-by-week time-table, as well as information on the documents already circulated or anticipated, with an indication of the date when these will be available in all working languages.

353. Needless to say, though the overt participation of the secretariats in the work of the Committees must of necessity be limited .. and in this connexion, the Inspectors are glad to note that this principle is more strictly abided by in the

United Nations than in some of the specialized agencies - some of the shortcomings observed by them in the work of the Main Committees were clearly attributable to excessive timidity, indeed even to a lack of initiative on the part of their secretariats. While the Inspectors share the view that the secretariats are "at the service" of the Committees, they do not think that this principle is incompatible with the exercise of greater initiative in helping the Chairman to steer the Committee's work to a successful conclusion within the framework of its time-table, or with the duty to remind him and delegates, if need be, of the stringencies (such as past Assembly decisions, calendar of conferences, limitations to the number of meetings and volume of documentation, etc.) under which all international organizations must needs operate. The Inspectors would urge, therefore, that Committee secretaries be selected with particular regard to the qualities of experience, alertness, tact, but also initiative which such a role demands.

(c) Organization of Work of the Main Committees

354. The problem of the rational organization of the work of the Main Committees is not a new one. It was dealt with in detail by the Ad Hoc Committee on the Improvement of the Methods of work of the General Assembly and in resolution 1898 (XVIII) of the General Assembly, with particular reference to the need for a detailed work-programme.

355. In section III of this part of their report, the Inspectors have gone even further than the Ad Hoc Committee and the General Assembly in this regard. They have also pointed out that the Committees' proceedings were erratic, being at first leisurely, then picking up speed and continuing under unnecessarily high pressure towards the end of the session, often to the detriment of the quality of these proceedings (see paragraph 323).

356. Annexes VI and VII are graphic illustrations of the number of meetings held by the Main Committees during each week of the General Assembly's twenty-fifth session. As will be seen, the Committees held only seventy-six meetings in the first four weeks, but 192 meetings in the last four. In other words, the average number of meetings per day during the first four weeks was only four, while the corresponding figure for the last four weeks was about ten.

357. This uneven distribution of meetings throughout the session is not only conducive to a very wasteful use of time and hence to unwarranted expense, but is a serious impediment to delegations, which though overburdened with work as it is, see this burden increased towards the end of the session when their ranks often thin out. The same holds true for the Secretariat staff which is often obliged to work overtime and under considerable pressure, for no justifiable reason.

358. The Inspectors believe that when the General Assembly begins to work according to a carefully prepared and strictly enforced time-table, many of these shortcomings will be met. However, the existence of such a time-table will not solve all of its problems. There must also be a change of attitude towards the methods of work of the Assembly and its Main Committees - by Secretariat, office-holders and delegations alike. And there must also be greater discipline in all quarters.

359. For instance, documents must be produced in good time so as to eliminate, or at least reduce to a minimum, cases in which the time-table has to be changed at the last minute owing to the absence of documentation. Moreover they should, whenever possible, include an indication of the kind of action expected of the Assembly. Consideration of an item should not be deferred merely because the officers of the subsidiary body concerned wish to attend the meetings in person, but are unable for personal reasons to be present at the time set for considering the item. Nor can it be judged admissible that consideration of the main item before the Fifth Committee - the budget estimates for the financial year 1971 - should, as was the case at the twenty-fifth session, be deferred for nearly twenty days because the statements by the Secretary-General and the Chairman of the Advisory Committee, who traditionally open the general debate on this item, were not ready. Nor, that consideration of the item entitled "Financial accounts and reports for the year ended 31 December 1969 and reports of the Board of Auditors" should at the same session be deferred until the middle of November in order to enable the Auditors to be present during the discussion of this item. Nor that the item on the scale of assessments for apportioning the expenses of the United Nations should be deferred until the end of October merely because the Chairman of the Committee on Contributions had expressed a wish to be present when the report was discussed, but was unable for personal reasons to be present when the Committee started its work.

360. More especial y, however, greater discipline is imperative if the Assembly is to make the best use of its time, let alone shorten its session.

(d) Better Utilization of Available Time

361. In theory, the existing facilities at Headquarters provide during a thirteen-week session of the Assembly for the possibility of 780 plenary and Main Committee meetings (i.e. 1,950 meeting-hours). During the past six sessions the average was never more

than 590 meetings (i.e. 1,475 meeting-hours). In terms of actual meeting-time, however the figures are even less satisfactory. For by reason of the delayed start of work of the Committees and the late start or early adjournment of their meetings, only about two-thirds of this potential time was in fact put to use (see Tables 7 and 8).

Table 7<sup>28/</sup>  
Loss of Meeting-Time  
(in hours)

<u>Session</u>	<u>No. of meetings</u>	<u>Total duration</u>	<u>Average duration</u>	<u>Total time loss</u>	<u>Average time loss per meeting</u>
Twenty-fifth	569	1,167.5	2.03	429.25	.45
Twenty-fourth	554	1,160.5	2.06	414.15	.45
Twenty-third	561	1,160.4	2.04	429.40	.53

362. Table 7 shows that the time lost on account of the late start or early adjournment of meetings alone has accounted in the past three years for almost one third of the total duration of the sessions - at the twenty-fifth session: 430 hours, or (on the basis of twelve possible two-and-a-half hour meetings per day) roughly fourteen work-days. Instead of an average planned duration of 150 minutes per meeting each meeting lasts little more than 120 minutes and in some cases much less (the Fourth Committee, for instance, during the past three sessions has never exceeded an average of 95 minutes per meeting!). This, however, is merely part of the picture.

363. Under resolution 1898 (XVIII), which dates back to 1963, "all the Main Committees except the First Committee, should begin their work not later than two working days after they have received the list of agenda items referred to them by the General Assembly".

364. Although all the Main Committees held their first organizational meeting within a week of the opening of the session, at the twenty-fifth as at earlier sessions this recommendation was ignored as far as the Committees' actual start of work was concerned by all but one of the Committees (i.e. the Second, which started its work three days after being allocated its agenda) (Table 8).

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28/    Source: Weekly Meetings Statistics of OCS

Table 8<sup>29/</sup>  
Start of Work of Committees  
(Twenty-fifth Session)

<u>Committee</u>	<u>Allocation of items</u>	<u>First Meeting</u>	<u>Start of work</u>	<u>Days Lost</u>
First	18 September	21 September	28 September	10
Special Political	"	22 September	2 October	14
Second	"	18 September	21 September	3
Third	"	22 September	28 September	10
Fourth	"	21 September	5 October	17
Fifth	"	21 September	5 October	17
Sixth	"	21 September	23 September	5

365. Putting together the time lost owing to the late start and early adjournment of Committee meetings and that lost owing to the late start of the Committees' sessions, one arrives, for the twenty-fifth session, at a total figure of between three weeks and one month.

366. In the Inspectors' opinion, such a wasteful use of time and resources is unique in the United Nations family of organizations, cannot be justified by the traditional argument regarding the allegedly "special nature" of the General Assembly and should not be allowed to continue.

367. The reasons for this time-loss appear to be many: the lack of a strictly timed work-programme, the chaotic nature of the United Nations meetings' calendar, the problem of delayed documents (which partly stems from the latter), the lack of discipline, outdated meetings procedures - to name only those which the Inspectors have already dealt with, or propose to deal with in this report.

368. The question of the work-programme has been gone into in detail. At this point, therefore, the Inspectors would merely suggest a concrete time-table for the first days of the session (which, to date, are put, in their opinion, to too little use).

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<sup>29/</sup> Source: Statistical Data on the General Assembly and the Main Committees (A/AC.149/L.4), Table 10.

369. As is seen from Table 8, the Committees, despite the explicit exhortation in resolution 1898 (XVIII), started work at the twenty-fifth session with an average loss of eleven work-days. In future, six days could be gained through the adoption of the following time-table:

<u>First Day:</u>	<u>p.m.</u>	The General Assembly convenes; Election of the President, Vice-Presidents and Chairman of Committees.
<u>Second Day:</u>	<u>a.m.</u>	The General Committee meets to examine the Provisional Agenda.
	<u>p.m.</u>	The General Committee completes the examination of the Provisional Agenda and reports to the General Assembly.
<u>Third Day:</u>	<u>a.m.</u>	The General Assembly approves the General Committee's report; allocates the items to the Main Committees and, if possible, begins the General Debate.
	<u>p.m.</u>	The Main Committees hold their first organizational meeting, elect their Vice-Chairmen and Rapporteurs and discuss the order in which the items on their agenda shall be taken up.
<u>Fourth Day:</u>	<u>a.m.</u>	Continuation of the General Debate;
		and If necessary, the Main Committees continue their
	<u>p.m.</u>	organizational meetings.
<u>First Monday following the start of the Session:</u>		All Main Committees (with the exception of the First) start their substantive work.

370. The above time-table takes into account the somewhat special position of the First Committee, but it goes further than did resolution 1898 (XVIII), inasmuch as it puts all Main Committees on the same footing as regards their organizational meetings, which is not only logical but feasible.

(i) Absence of Documentation

371. As far as the Inspectors could see, the main reason why the Main Committees at the twenty-fifth, as at earlier sessions, were forced to delay the start of their work was the absence of documentation. Indeed, a comparison between table 4 and Annex VI of this report shows that with the exception of the First Committee (which is

in a somewhat special position), and the Fifth (the late start of which is explained in paragraph 359), there is a definite correlation between the availability of pre-session documents and the start of a Committee's work. This failure to produce documents on time not only delays the start of the Committees' work, but also makes it difficult to establish a realistic time-table for the work of the Main Committees, the importance of which the Inspectors have repeatedly emphasized.

372. As pointed out in paragraphs 4 and 142, under the present system, no clear distinction (as far as symbols are concerned) is made between "pre-session" and "in-session" documents, with many patently in-session documents coming out under the A/... symbol and many pre-session reports being issued under the A/C ... symbol. The Inspectors were obliged, therefore, to start out from the hypothesis that the 15 odd per cent of A/... documents that belong in fact to the in-session group are by and large cancelled out by the 15 odd per cent of A/C... documents that belong just as clearly in the pre-session group. At the opening of the General Assembly's twenty-fifth session, out of a total of 421 scheduled A/... documents, only 73 had been released. During the first month after the opening of the session 97 further documents were circulated. The remaining 251 documents were circulated in the second half of November and in December. These figures represent admittedly an ordre de grandeur, but they give nevertheless, in the Inspectors' view, a valid idea of how poorly planned the issuance of Assembly documents is at present.

373. Part A of this report contains a detailed analysis of the causes of delay in the issuance of documents and suggests remedial measures.

(ii) Quorum Problems

374. As can be seen from Table 9, the total time loss on account of the late start or early ending of General Assembly meetings (plenary and Main Committees) has varied over the past 7 years from 408 to 493 hours (or the equivalent of 14 to 16 work-days).

Table 9<sup>30/</sup>  
Loss of Meeting Time

<u>Sessions</u>	<u>Late start (minutes)</u>	<u>Early ending (minutes)</u>	<u>Time lost (per meeting) (minutes)</u>	<u>Total time lost (per session) (hours)</u>
Twenty-fifth	23	22	45	430
Twenty-fourth	23	22	45	414
Twenty-third	32	21	53	493
Twenty-second	23	28	52	469
Twenty-first	20	22	42	397
Twentieth	23	26	49	440
Eighteenth	15	27	42	408

375. The reason usually given for meetings starting late is the lack of a quorum, and for finishing early, the lack of speakers, or group meetings, or what are known euphemistically as "consultations". At the twenty-fifth session the Inspectors attempted a somewhat more sophisticated breakdown of the reasons for such time-losses. Out of a total of some 480 meetings for which they were able to obtain data, the lack of a quorum accounted for 330 cases, "consultations" for 73, the lack of speakers for 52 and miscellaneous for the remainder. In seven of these (four cases in one Committee alone) the meetings started late because the Chairman was late.

376. The Inspectors realize that many delegations are not large enough to attend, let alone participate in, all meetings of the Assembly and are therefore obliged to divide the time of their representatives between several Committees, or to assign them only to those meetings at which items of special interest to them are discussed. While the Inspectors sympathize with the staffing problems of these delegations, they feel that it is hardly right that the others should be made to waste their time for lack of a quorum.

377. It would be unfair to say that the cause of the late start of meetings rests solely with delegations faced with staffing problems. The main reason is undoubtedly a slackening of discipline which, if less acute at the twenty-fifth session than at

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<sup>30/</sup> Source: "Statistical Data on the General Assembly and the Main Committees" A/AC.149/L.4, Table 11.

the twenty-second or twenty-third, was nevertheless clearly more serious than at the eighteenth. At the same time, the Inspectors note that the situation varies not only from one session to the other, but, over the years, from one Committee to the next, depending on the firmness of the Chairman. This would seem to dispose of the all-too-often invoked argument that such delays are "in the nature of the work of certain Committees." The Inspectors recall likewise that at the seventeenth session, the President made a point of calling plenary meetings to order on time, whether there was a quorum or not. This practice was never questioned and within a matter of days, there was invariably a quorum.

378. The Inspectors suggest, therefore, that the Assembly decide that the quorum requirement in rule 110 should apply only to the vote and that meetings should begin, irrespective of the number of delegates present, within 10 minutes of the scheduled starting-time. This is being done in UNESCO, with noticeable success.<sup>31/</sup>

(iii) Lack of Speakers

379. The loss of time owing to the lack of speakers on a given item lends itself to no cut-and-dried remedy, since there may be legitimate reasons for delegations to postpone their statements. One time-tested solution, at least in some Committees, has been the taking-up of a second item whenever the discussion of the original item is stalled, whether for lack of speakers or owing to "consultations" or for any other reason, it being understood that no final disposal of the stop-gap item takes place at that meeting unless the Committee decides otherwise, and that advance notice will have been given to Committee members. Past experience shows, likewise, that the early closing of the speakers' list is apt to speed up proceedings.

380. The Inspectors feel that these are still the most reasonable solutions but that they require to be institutionalized in the sense that in the first place, the Committee's work-programmes would provide for the possible concurrent examination of at least two items, these being so selected as to ensure that the delegations' experts who may be called upon to handle them, will be present at the time; furthermore, the speakers' list on any item should be closed at the end of the second meeting at which the item is discussed.

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<sup>31/</sup> The General Conference of UNESCO at its sixteenth session in 1970 approved a proposal of the Executive Board whereby meetings may, with the agreement of all Member States present, be called to order five minutes after the scheduled time without the necessity of a quorum.

381. Since these two measures may still not suffice to ensure the elimination of unwarranted delays and since it is clearly unfair that some delegates should be penalized by losing their turn on the speakers' list on account of others postponing their statements, whatever their reasons for doing so, the Inspectors suggest that as a matter of principle, defaulting speakers should lose their priority on the official list and that they be called upon only once the latter is exhausted.

(iv) Courtesy statements

382. Complimentary remarks at the start or upon the completion of the Committees' work, and words of thanks, tributes, expressions of sympathy and other courtesy statements continue to account, according to the statistics of the Secretariat, for far too many hours of the Assembly's working time - at the twenty-fifth session, a total of at least 22 hours and 19 minutes (or almost four work-days), as compared to 21 hours and 45 minutes at the twenty-fourth session. The Inspectors observed that in only one of the Main Committees at the twenty-fifth session did the Chairman suggest the exercise of restraint in this regard, with commendable results which in no way detracted from the solemnity or grace of the Committee's proceedings.

383. The Inspectors recommend, therefore, that the General Assembly decide that (i) the President of the Assembly or the Chairman of the Committee (as the case may be) should make a single brief statement thanking the members for electing him and the other officers of the committee to their high office; and thereafter the Delegation of the country which provided the outgoing presiding officer should, in the name of the members of the Committee or of the Assembly, offer felicitations to the office-bearers; there should be no more congratulatory statements at any time of the session; (ii) that tributes, expressions of sympathy and similar statements be (as is sometimes the practice now) grouped, but that these groups be reduced in number to the strictest minimum (say, one per region, plus one for the delegations wishing to speak outside the regional context and which could be invited to select a joint spokesman for the occasion), and (iii) only the speaker nominating a candidate for office in a Committee should address himself to the qualifications and merits of the candidate; the delegates seconding this nomination should limit themselves to doing just that.

(v) Mechanical Voting

384. The introduction of mechanical voting on resolutions and amendments in the plenary meetings of the Assembly has led to a considerable saving of time. There is, however, no such system in the case of voting involving secret ballots. And yet even though the co-operation of the regional groups has speeded up the process, much time is still lost, for instance, in electing the members of the International Court of Justice, the Economic and Social Council, the International Law Commission and other bodies, especially so where election takes place through a process of elimination (roughly 30 minutes per vacancy). Under the present system, tellers are appointed and members have to walk to the rostrum of the Assembly to cast their ballots in the ballot box provided. Thereafter, the tellers necessarily take a good deal of time in classifying and analysing the votes. Where successive votes have to be taken the Assembly may, and in fact does, lose many hours of valuable working time.

385. The Inspectors understand that thought has already been given to, and even studies undertaken of, the possibility of using a system of mechanical voting also for such elections by secret ballot. They are aware of the technical difficulties involved. Nevertheless they feel that such studies should be intensified and hope that the Assembly will be informed accordingly.

(vi) Reports from the Main Committees to the General Assembly

386. There exists no uniform practice as regards the presentation by the Rapporteurs of the reports from the Main Committees to the General Assembly. Some of the Rapporteurs confine themselves to a few introductory remarks, after which they go straight on to read out the decision recommended by the Committee to the Assembly. Others, however, read out the whole report virtually verbatim. Some of these reports are fairly brief, but some may be long.

387. As a general principle, the Inspectors would suggest that Rapporteurs be invited to confine their oral presentation of Committee reports to an introductory paragraph, followed by the recommendation by the Committee upon which action is required of the Assembly.

(vii) Night and Saturday Meetings

388. In each of the cases they analysed and which, in their view, contributes to the deplorable loss of time at General Assembly sessions, the Inspectors have suggested specific remedies. They will now address themselves briefly to the one remedy which has been resorted to from the first and which appears to be nowadays, unfortunately, still the only one Member States seem willing to countenance without much questioning, i.e. night or Saturday meetings.

389. At the twenty-fifth session there were twelve night meetings, totalling 31 hours and 35 minutes, and eleven Saturday meetings, totalling 22 hours and 55 minutes. These two types of meetings accounted, in terms of overtime, for 64 hours and 5 minutes, and 27 hours and 10 minutes, respectively.

390. There is no doubt that such meetings can hardly be avoided once a Committee's work lags behind schedule. The trouble is that they are both costly (in terms of overtime pay) and counter-productive. The Inspectors are hopeful that the adoption of their recommendations, by contributing to bringing greater order and discipline into the Assembly's proceedings, may help obviate the need for night meetings. On the other hand, they feel that Saturday morning meetings should be scheduled by Committees whose weekly work-programme has not been fulfilled, from the very start of the session, as well as for group and working-group meetings, thus reserving on week-days as much meeting space and services as possible for Main Committee work.

VII. The Duration of the General Assembly's Session

391. As the Inspectors have shown, the servicing capacity at Headquarters allows for twelve concurrent meetings daily, making up a total of 780 meetings during the thirteen weeks which a session of the General Assembly lasts at present. During the past six years, the meetings-ratio per session has never exceeded 590, or roughly fifty work-days, i.e. ten weeks of theoretical meeting-time.

392. Even this potential capacity, however, as the Inspectors have demonstrated, has not been fully utilised, since owing to such factors as the delayed start of their work, the late start and early adjournment of their meetings, the time spent on such matters as courtesy statements, and the like, the Main Committees, at the twenty-fifth session, lost an additional twenty-nine work-days.

393. A rationalisation of the Assembly's proceedings along the lines suggested by the Inspectors in such matters as the streamlining of the Assembly's agenda, a radical improvement in the documents situation, a tightening up of the proceedings of the Assembly itself during the first week of the session and of the Main Committees throughout, improved programming of the general debate, greater restraint as regards the length and frequency of statements, and improved discipline, generally, can be expected to result in additional time saving. The Inspectors therefore suggest that: (i) the duration of the Assembly's session should not exceed ten weeks; and (ii) all Main Committees should complete their work within eight weeks.

\* \* \*

394. As they did in regard to part A of this report, the Inspectors have summarised separately their main recommendations. Their other suggestions are contained in the relevant paragraphs of part B of the report proper, specifically in paragraphs: 297, 324-326, 299, 303, 304, 307, 317, 321, 326, 345, 351, 352, 353, 356-357, 360, 379-380, 381 and 385.

Part B

VIII. Summary of Main Recommendations<sup>32/</sup>

Recommendations Requiring a Decision by the General Assembly

Recommendation 1: The maximum duration of a session of the General Assembly should be ten weeks (paragraphs 391 - 393);

Recommendation 2: The Main Committees should complete their work within eight weeks (paragraphs 391 - 393);

Recommendation 3: Prior to each regular session of the General Assembly the Secretary-General should draw up a tentative work-programme for the Plenary and for each Committee. The work-programme should include the closing dates for the general debate. It should be circulated at least thirty days prior to the opening date of the session for consideration by the General Committee (paragraphs 309 - 312);

Recommendation 4: The provisional agenda prepared by the Secretary-General under rule 13 of the rules of procedure should be accompanied by an annotated agenda giving for each item a succinct statement on: (i) the substance of the item, together with a brief background history (how long it has been on the agenda, how long and for what reasons its consideration has been deferred; which subsidiary body has been considering it and what point has been reached in its consideration); (ii) the situation regarding documentation; and (iii) the kind of action required by the Assembly and the degree of urgency of such action (paragraphs 333 - 335);

Recommendation 5: In exercising its functions of organizing and co-ordinating the proceedings of the General Assembly and its main Committees, the General Committee should play a more effective role within the framework laid down in the rules of procedure and in past recommendations of the General Assembly. It should meet not less than once a week and exercise close supervision over the manner in which Committees conform to the work schedule of the Assembly (paragraphs 329 - 341);

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<sup>32/</sup> The recommendations relating to part A of this report are to be found on pages 81 to 85.

Recommendation 6: Before each Committee begins its substantive work, the Chairman, with the assistance of the Secretariat, should prepare a programme of work containing the following details, for the approval of the Committee:

- (a) the order in which the items are to be considered;
- (b) the target dates for beginning and concluding the consideration of each item (or group of items, if it is decided to consider a number of items together);
- (c) the situation regarding the documentation on each item (paragraph 350);

Recommendation 7: At the beginning of its work, each of the main Committees should establish a working group to prepare, by the end of the session, recommendations as to which recurrent items should be included in the provisional agenda of the next session (paragraphs 290 - 302);

Recommendation 8: In cases where related items must continue to be allocated to different Committees, joint sessions of these Committees should be held as appropriate (paragraphs 298, 326);

Recommendation 9: Presiding officers should be available throughout the duration of the session. In proposing candidates for office Member States should pay regard to this requirement, as well as to their experience of the work of the General Assembly or other United Nations bodies (paragraphs 346 - 349);

Recommendation 10: Every week the bureau of each Committee should review its progress and if the work is behind schedule, a Saturday morning meeting should be held (paragraphs 328, 388);

Recommendation 11: Meetings should be called to order within ten minutes of the scheduled starting time, irrespective of the number of delegates present (paragraphs 374 - 378);

Recommendation 12: As a general rule, no item in the economic, social and human rights fields should, unless the General Assembly decides otherwise, be considered by the Assembly prior to the completion of its examination by the appropriate subsidiary body (paragraphs 290 - 296, 303 - 304) (see also Part A, recommendation 6);

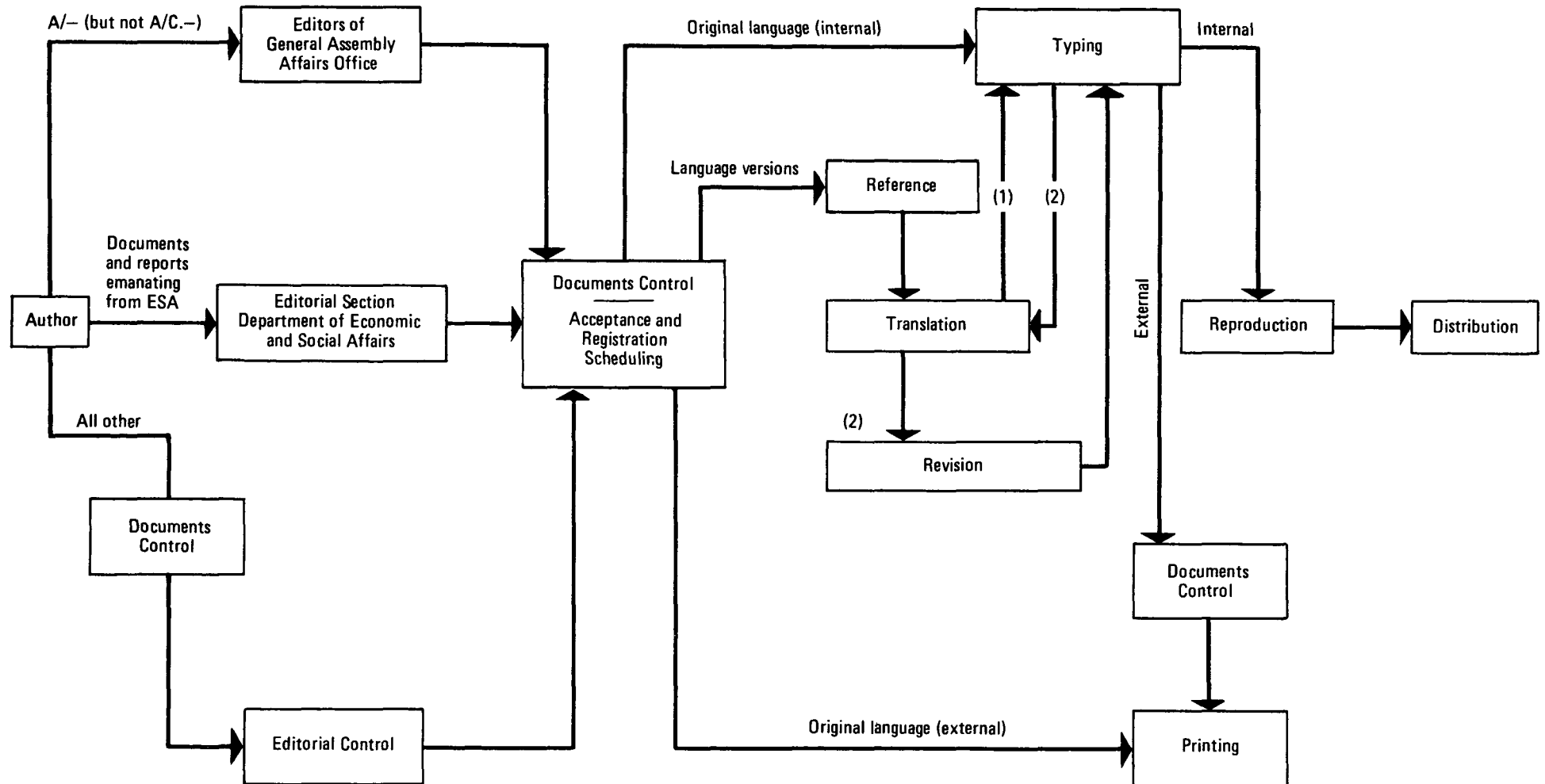
Recommendation 13: With a view to making the General Assembly and its Committees more efficient and more productive:

- (a) as the first item of business in the work of the main Committees, the Chairman should communicate to delegates the information referred to in paragraphs 60 and 350 (see also part A, recommendation 23);
- (b) at the start of the general debate in Plenary the President should invite speakers not to exceed thirty minutes, or ten minutes in the case of right of reply (paragraphs 313 - 315);
- (c) in the Main Committees statements should not exceed fifteen minutes, unless specifically otherwise decided (paragraph 327);
- (d) tributes, expressions of sympathy, and similar courtesy statements should be grouped with a view to reducing them to a minimum; following elections, the President of the General Assembly or Chairman of a Committee, as the case may be, should make a brief statement thanking members for electing him and other officers and thereafter there should be no other congratulatory statements except by the delegation of the country which provided the outgoing presiding officer (paragraphs 382-383);
- (e) the list of speakers on any item should be closed at the end of the second meeting in the course of which the item is discussed;
- (f) statements of rapporteurs should be as brief as possible and concern themselves principally with the recommendations upon which action is required (paragraphs 386 - 387).

ANNEX I

DOCUMENTS FLOW-CHART

(Headquarters)



Annex II

ILO

BUDGET PRESENTATION OF MEETINGS COSTS

Direct and Indirect Costs of Meetings<sup>1/</sup> in the  
Draft Programme and Budget Proposals for 1972-73

	<u>US\$</u>
Salaries and overtime of temporary staff	284,000
Travel costs of participants and staff	1,893,500
Documents	48,000
Equipment and Supplies	2,500
Freight, postage and cable charges	50,000
Hospitality	8,000 <sup>2/</sup>
Salaries and other staff costs of:	
(a) Conference Services	92,000
(b) Documents Services	429,000
(c) Linguistic Services	486,000
(d) Planning, Preparation and Servicing	401,500
(e) Preparation of Reports	609,000
	<u>4,303,500</u>

1/

Costs relating to the International Labour Conference and the Governing Body have not been included in the figures given above.

2/

There are no firm estimates for hospitality allocations, which are made at the discretion of the Director-General from the resources of the General Hospitality Fund.

Annex III  
UNESCO  
DOCUMENTS AND PUBLICATIONS SERVICES

Object of Expenditure	1969-1970		1971-1972	Increase (Decrease) over revalued	
	Approved	Revalued			
	\$	\$	\$	\$	%
Staff costs	4,855,947	5,164,356	5,525,410	361,054	7
Temporary assistance	298,266	312,395	355,447	43,052	14
Contracts	370,640	392,100	444,248	52,148	13
Overtime	25,260	26,315	30,315	4,000	15
Printing	10,455	11,330	31,700	20,370	180
Staff travel	6,150	6,520	6,520	-	-
Hospitality	360	360	360	-	-
Total	5,567,078	5,913,376	6,394,000	480,624	8

The staff of the Bureau will have the following service capacity:

		<u>Increase</u>
		%
Translation in five languages	: 113,200 standard pages	13.5
Composition in five languages	: 190,000 standard pages	10.0
Internal printing	: 155,000,000 printed pages	10.0
Copy-preparing, art-work and proof reading	: 73,500 standard pages	13.0

The distribution of the total capacity of the Bureau by Parts of the budget is approximately as follows:

	<u>Percentage</u>
Part I - General policy	28%
Part II - Programme operations and services	68%
Part III - General administration and programme supporting services	4%
Total	<u>100%</u>

Annex IVFAOPUBLICATIONS DIVISIONBudget Appropriations

Article	1966-67 Expenditure ¢	1968-69 Approved Budget as Adjusted \$	1970-71 Estimates ¢	Increase or Decrease of 1970-71 over 1968-69 ¢
Grand Total:	3 803 157	4 281 050	<u>5 405 250</u>	+1 124 200
1. Personal Services	3 456 358	3 877 550	4 929 150	+1 051 600
1.1 Salaries, Established Posts, gross	-	((3 365 750))	((4 314 600))	-
Less: Staff Assessment	-	(( 608 500))	(( 869 400))	-
Salaries, Established Posts, net	(2 588 972)	(2 757 250)	(3 445 200)	(+ 687 950)
1.2 Salaries, Temporary Posts	( 98 984)	( 220 000)	( 199 600)	(- 20 400)
1.3 Consultants	( 7 961)	( - )	( - )	( - )
1.4 Common Staff Costs	( 711 513)	( 883 400)	(1 244 250)	(+ 360 850)
1.5 Overtime	( 48 928)	( 16 900)	( 40 100)	(+ 23 200)
2. Travel	4 581	2 100	1 200	+ 2 100
3. Supplies	342 218	401 400	466 900	+ 65 500
4. Documents	-	-	5 000	+ 5 000
4.1 (Contractual Translation)	-	-	( 5 000)	(+ 5 000)
Budgeted by User-Chapters: Total	880 861	1 213 050	<u>1 377 000</u>	+ 163 950
5. External Printing	( 764 305)	( 987 400)	(1 112 325)	(+ 124 925)
6. Contractual Translation	( 116 556)	( 225 650)	( 264 675)	(+ 39 025)
Total Funds available for Documents Work	4 684 018	5 494 100	<u>6 782 250</u>	+1 288 150

ANNEX IV (cont.)

Allocation of Publications Division Services, Regular Programme, 1970-71

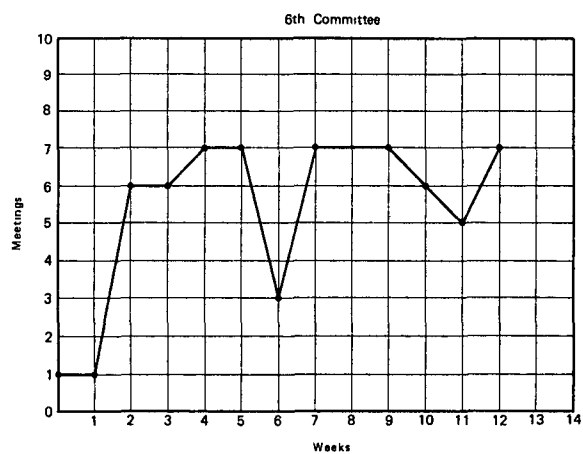
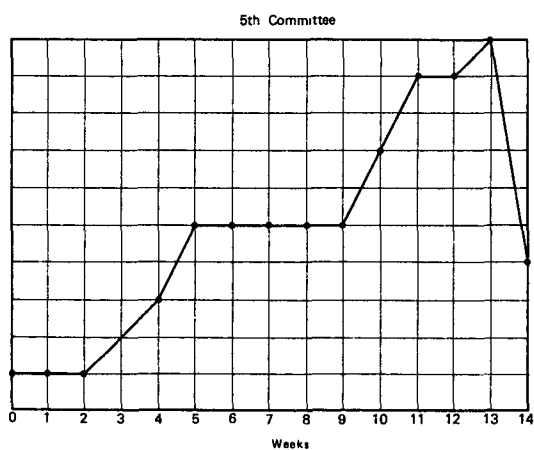
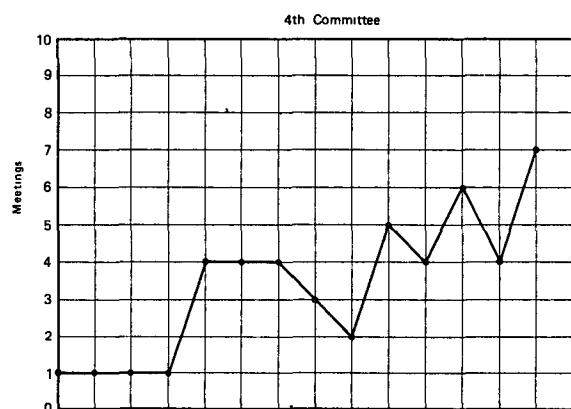
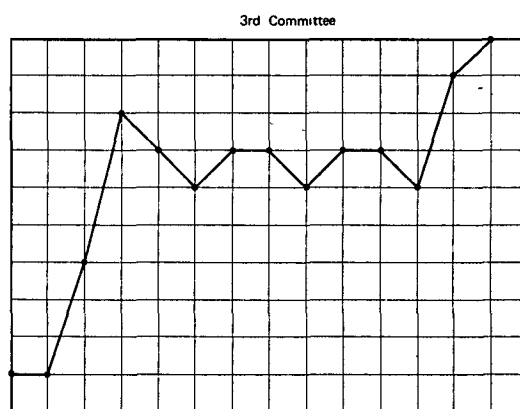
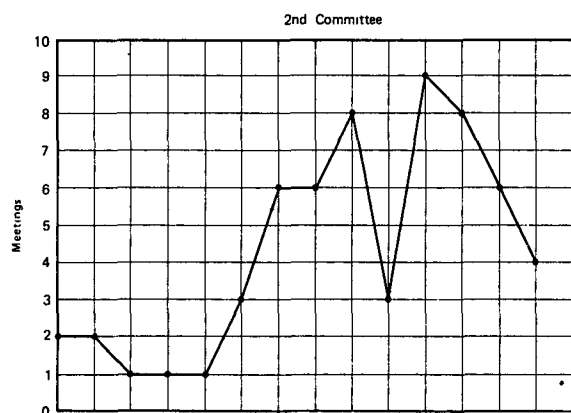
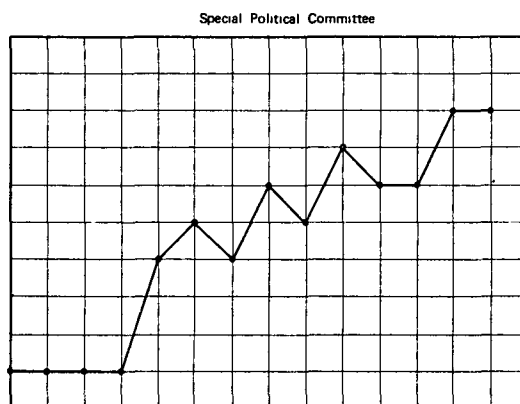
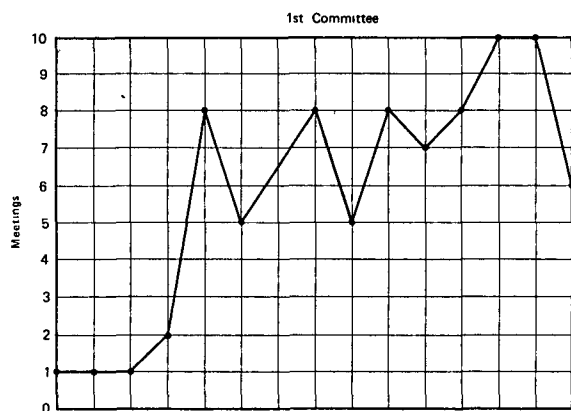
Chapters	Staff translations: (English, French and Spanish, in thousands of words)	Internal Printing: (in thousands of printed pages)	Approximate Distribution of PU internal facilities \$	Budgeted in "User" Chapters (Ext. Printing and Contract Transl.) \$	Total Documents Funds (Approximate distribution for information) \$
I-A Conference and Council	4 000	19 816	652 644	87 000	739 644
I-B Office of Director-General and Deputy Director-General, Immediate Offices	1 172	3 204	130 757	1 900	132 657
- Legal Counsel	280	387	25 328	-	25 328
- Policy Advisory Bureau	250	1 000	32 835	-	32 835
- FFHC (Co-ordinator's Office)	1 005	7 453	186 190	4 300	190 490
- WFC	-	-	-	-	-
II Development Department (exclud- ing Codex Alimentarius and Investment Centre)	350	5 036	102 940	13 000	115 940
- Codex Alimentarius	1 757	16 047	371 585	-	371 585
- Investment Centre	-	1 450	22 640	-	22 640
III-A Office of General Affairs and Information (excluding Publications Division)	546	10 288	208 907	259 100	468 007
III-B Publications Division	70	1 860	33 864	5 000	38 864
IV-A Department of Administration and Finance			24 468	9 850	34 318
- Office of Assistant Director-General	-	25			
- Personnel Division	-	-			
- Finance Division	192	550			
- Management Services Division	-	100			
- Administrative Services Division	-	45			
V Common Services			636 135	109 250	745 385
- Personnel Division	1 161	15 380			
- Finance Division	-	180			
- Management Services Division	100	16 378			
- Administrative Services Division	-	3 240			
VI-A Agriculture Department					
- Office of Assistant Director-General	16	160	3 601	-	3 601
- Animal Production and Health Division	1 379	1 982	185 156	56 050	241 206
- Land and Water Development Division	1 220	2 867	150 186	38 100	188 286
- Plant Production and Protection Division	949	2 436	158 041	48 050	206 091
- Agricultural Services Division	1 000	2 400	142 875	37 950	180 825
- Joint FAO/IAEA Division	-	-	-	26 250	26 250
VI-B Fisheries Department	2 000	17 500	513 531	209 150	722 681
VI-C Economic and Social Department					
- Office of Assistant Director-General	-	-	-	-	-
- Economic Analysis Division	496	1 327	80 942	8 600	89 542
- Commodities and Trade Division	2 562	14 400	413 820	107 100	520 920
- Nutrition Division	481	2 490	108 860	56 750	165 610
- Rural Institutions Division	888	3 225	167 503	60 300	227 803
- Statistics Division	1 592	3 946	291 689	161 000	452 689
VI-D Forestry Department	2 136	7 093	409 883	78 300	488 183
Interdivisional allocation for areas of concentration and other unforeseen needs	798	2 735	97 670	-	97 670
Translation, reproduction and distribu- tion of certain documents and publications in Arabic			253 200	-	253 200
Total	26 400	165 000	5 405 250	1 377 000	6 782 250

Annex V

Potential Savings that would have resulted in 1970  
if the Inspectors' recommendations had been in effect

Paragraph of JIU Report	Documents	Present Volume		Suggested Volume		Potential Savings	
		Pages	Page Units	Pages	Page Units	Pages	Page Units
64-69	E/CN.4/...	734	2,495,600	145	493,000	589	2,002,600
70-72	E/CN.4/Sub.2	1,646	5,612,860	1,135	3,870,350	511	1,742,510
75	A/8022/Add.1	(54)	(291,600)	-	-	-	-
	S/9939/Add.1	(54)	(247,590)	-	-	-	-
	A/8022/Rev.1			-	-	-	-
	- Suppl. No.22	(54)	(268,650)	-	-	-	-
		162	807,840	54	291,600	108	516,240
76-87	A/AC.109/...	(850)(appr.)	(2,720,000)				
	or						
	A/AC.109/L...	850 (appr.)	2,401,250 (appr.)	850 (appr.)	2,401,250 (appr.)	-	-
	A/8023/Add.1	850	5,389,200	-	-	850	5,389,200
	to 8						
	A/8023/Rev.1						
	Suppl. No.23	850	4,740,000	-	-	850	4,740,000
	(part of)	?	(5,400 per page)	-	-	?	?
	A/8148 (part of)	?		-	-	?	
	A/8148/Add.1						
	- Suppl. 23A						
	(part of)	?	(4,750 per page)	-	-	?	?
		2,550	12,530,450	850	2,401,250	1,700	10,129,200
129-134	A/8023/Add.5						
	(Part I)	42	226,800	12	64,800	30	162,000
	A/8023/Rev.1						
	- Suppl. No.23	42	199,500	2	9,500	40	190,000
	(Part of)						
		84	426,300	14	74,300	70	352,000
135-137	S/...						
	(delegation						
	letters)(1969)	70	319,930	-	-	70	319,930
203-206	A/8023/Add.2						
	(part of)	9	48,600	-	-	9	48,600
	A/8023/Rev.1						
	- Suppl. No. 23	9	42,750	-	-	9	42,750
	(part of)	15	81,000	-	-	15	81,000
	A/8148 and Add.1						
	A/8148/Rev.1	15	71,250	-	-	15	71,250
	- Suppl. No.23A						
		48	243,600	-	-	48	243,600
<u>Sub-total</u>		5,294	22,436,580	2,198	7,130,500	3,096	15,306,080
	A/8024 -						
	Suppl. No.24	4	19,000	15	71,250	Additional: pages/ 11 page-units:	
							52,250
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>		5,298	22,455,580	2,213	7,201,750	3,085	15,253,830
<b>%</b>						(-58%)	(-32%)

ANNEX VI  
WEEKLY FREQUENCY OF MAIN COMMITTEE MEETINGS  
(Twenty fifth Session)



ANNEX VII  
WEEKLY WORKLOAD OF MAIN COMMITTEES  
(Twenty-fifth Session)

