

# UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME



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## ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

### Control and limitation of documentation

#### Note by the Secretariat

In a letter dated 24 February 1982, the Secretary-General informed the Administrator of a number of steps taken within the Secretariat with a view to controlling the volume of documentation, enhancing its quality and ensuring its distribution in good time. The text of this letter is reproduced for the information of delegations as it might have a bearing on future activities in connexion with rationalizing the work of the Council. The letter reads as follows:

"In recent years, the volume, quality and timely provision of documentation for meetings of United Nations bodies in the required languages have been the subject of a great deal of attention. Many studies have been made, and many decisions adopted, but the problem continues to affect adversely the orderly transaction of the Organization's work.

"I consider this question to be a central one in the effective implementation of the various programmes of the United Nations. With that in view, I established an interdepartmental group in the Secretariat to advise me on what action might be taken to improve the situation. On the basis of that group's recommendations, I am taking a number of steps within the Secretariat with a view to controlling the volume of documentation, enhancing its quality and ensuring its distribution in good time.

"With regard to the United Nations, some of those steps, particularly in the area of controlling the volume of documentation, will require the co-operation and support of States Members, as represented by their delegations in various bodies. In this regard, I will not only continue to appeal for the general restraint in matters of documentation so often urged by the General Assembly, but, more specifically, I will seek stricter adherence to the spirit of the decisions on documentation adopted by the Assembly and by the Economic and Social Council, even in cases in which the language of such decisions is permissive. In practical terms, this will mean that my representative in a body, or the secretary of a body, will be enjoined to inform delegations of decisions and rules that apply to specific proposals which give rise to documentation. They will also draw attention to reporting practices which are not in keeping with the decisions and rules, or which otherwise may be altered to result in reductions of the volume of documentation. I will ask the heads of permanent

missions to the United Nations to ensure that, when these occasions arise, delegations should give careful consideration to the Secretariat position, which is taken only in the general interest of Member States. The importance of a subject, or of the body dealing with it, should not be measured in terms of the volume of the documentation it produces.

"As a first, immediate step, I am lowering the page-limit for United Nations Secretariat reports from 32 pages to 24 pages, and am requesting organs and subsidiary organs which may appoint special rapporteurs or expert groups to prepare reports on their behalf to assist us in our endeavours by establishing a limit of 32 pages. In the same spirit, I expect that the decisions taken by both the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council that reports of their subsidiary bodies should be action-oriented and should not exceed a desirable limit of 32 pages should be complied with. The attention of subsidiary bodies whose reports have traditionally exceeded this limit will be drawn to these decisions, and suggestions will be made as to how the reports may be made more concise.

"Of course, a major reduction in the volume of documentation can come only from a reduction in the number of reports requested by legislative organs. To achieve our common objective of obtaining better documentation service at lower cost, the heads of permanent missions to the United Nations will be requested to review those cases in which their delegations may have played a significant role in requesting the preparation of reports or the circulation of documents in order to ascertain whether in the future such requests might be reduced.

"Since the United Nations Development Programme depends upon the conference-servicing facilities of the United Nations for the processing of its documentation, I hope you will accept that, in the general interest, this material should be subject to the same rules and regulations as those applicable in the case of organs and subsidiary organs of the United Nations. I would be most grateful to you if the matter could also be presented in this light to your Governing Council.

"I am convinced that, with increased efforts on the part of the secretariats and with the concern and co-operation of delegations, the problems involving documentation can be reduced. It is in that spirit that I seek your assistance in the days and months to come.

(Signed) "Javier PEREZ DE CUELLAR

" Secretary-General "