



**Governing Council
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POLICY

PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS ADOPTED BY THE GOVERNING COUNCIL
AT ITS PREVIOUS SESSIONS

Report of the President on the outcome of the informal
consultations foreseen by decision 89/20

Working methods of the Governing Council: first
consultation held on 13 February 1990

Note by the President of the Governing Council

Addendum

I. BACKGROUND

1. As indicated in paragraph 10 of the note by the President on the outcome of the consultations held on 13 February (DP/1990/82), the secretariat of the Governing Council was invited to prepare a note which would review and analyse decisions designed to ensure a better functioning of the Council, starting with decision 81/37 of 27 June 1981. The relevant decisions are listed in the appendix to annex I of document DP/1990/82.

2. For the sake of brevity, the present note focuses on specific aspects of working methods dealt with by previous decisions which have not been fully implemented and which merit further consideration by the Governing Council. Also offered are a few additional practical suggestions in the light of the secretariat's experience over the past decade.

II. DURATION AND NUMBER OF MEETINGS

3. In paragraph 7 of the annex to decision 87/50 of 18 June 1987, the Governing Council noted that while General Assembly resolution 32/71 of 9 December 1977 had authorized the Council to hold one regular session annually (as compared to two sessions up to that time), the actual time spent on meetings had remained seven weeks. Since 1987, even more time has been spent on meetings, with the addition in 1989 and 1990 of a series of informal consultations needing full interpretation and other services. Moreover, by decision 90/4 on the preparation for the fifth programming cycle, the Council decided to convene informal consultations on this matter with interpretation services, although the secretariat had brought to the notice of the Council the requirements in this regard (i.e., a statement of programme and budget implications, inclusion in the official calendar of meetings and the establishment of entitlements for conference services by the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council).

4. The note of the President already refers to the burden the increased number of meetings places on delegations and the UNDP Administration. The Governing Council may therefore wish to consider once again whether it is possible to reduce the number and duration of meetings, without in any way relinquishing its important policy functions.

5. To achieve this, this Governing Council may have to revert to the idea of a single, regular session, thus limiting the scheduling of special sessions in February and other inter-sessional meetings throughout the year. As foreseen by decisions 81/37 and 83/5, a brief meeting could be scheduled prior to the regular session to consider country programmes and special items. Greater use could be made throughout the year of informal consultations with members of the Council convened by the Administrator in accordance with paragraph 3 (n) of decision 81/37.

6. The Governing Council might wish to adopt the practice of establishing, through the Committee of Conferences, a full calendar of meetings for the year for the eventual appropriation of resources by the General Assembly. For the various types of inter-sessional meetings which cannot be included in the calendar of meetings, consideration might be given for UNDP to establish a small multi-purpose conference room with portable interpretation facilities. UNDP could also be permitted to obtain interpreters on a contractual basis whenever United Nations conference services are not in a position to provide such services. Such a conference room could also be used for training, staff meetings and related purposes, thus making it more cost-effective. As a first step, should the Council so wish, the Administrator could provide an estimate of the costs involved.

III. MATTERS RELATED TO THE AGENDA

7. Based on paragraph 3 (e) of its decision 81/37, the Governing Council has adopted a structure for its agenda which has proved to be very helpful for the orderly conduct of Council business. However, one issue which could perhaps be handled more efficiently is the question of the policy review during the high-level segment. The Council needs to decide how best to attract senior policy makers in

order to give the Council a more dynamic role on emerging major policy issues under its control (see 81/37, paras. 1-3). The organizational meeting of the preceding year should be used to initiate a process of deciding whether to hold a high-level discussion on a special topic. An appropriate subject could then be adopted by the Council at its regular session in June.

8. Further progress could be made in the biennialization of funds and programmes under the supervision of the Governing Council. This subject was dealt with in paragraph 3 (f) of decision 81/37 and paragraph 1 of annex A of decision 87/1. Unfortunately the Council has not been able to adhere to these decisions, as recent agendas reveal. For example, 1990 is an off-year for the United Nations Fund for Science and Technology for Development (UNFSTD) and the United Nations Revolving Fund for Natural Resources Exploration (UNRFNRE); none the less, full reports are required on the future of these funds (agenda items 8 (c) and (d)). The same pattern has occurred in previous years.

9. The Governing Council may wish to consider whether annually recurring items could be reviewed biennially. For example, items on this year's agenda which fall into this category, except for the Annual Report of the Administrator and the annual review of the financial situation, are: non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and grass-roots organizations, women in development, procurement from developing countries, assistance to national liberation movements (NLMs), implementation of selected country programmes, the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the United Nations system regular and extrabudgetary expenditures. The Council may wish to select some of these subjects for in-depth review every second year.

IV. DECISIONS

10. A question raised during the consultations on 13 February 1990, and which has also been the subject of previous consideration by the Governing Council, is the limitation on the number and length of decisions. The Council may wish to consider the following:

(a) An effort should be made to reduce the number of decisions elaborated by the Drafting Group and the Budgetary and Finance Committee to those containing specific policy direction and requests for action on the part of the Administrator; items on which no specific action is required could be taken note of in plenary, as is the case already for a few items;

(b) To the maximum extent possible, decisions on similar topics should be combined;

(c) No decision should contain more than one preambular paragraph.

V. DOCUMENTATION

11. A continuing concern of the Governing Council, as reflected in numerous decisions, is the timely distribution of documentation. While in overall terms, the average number of pages per report has declined over the past decade (as a result of measures taken by the secretariat, including issuing some background information in English only and by the use of contractual translations), the increase in the number of reports being requested in decisions of the Governing Council does pose a problem. A suggestion was made during the informal consultations on 13 February 1990 that the Bureau of the Council could review all requests for reports during the thirty-seventh session with a view to reducing the number of reports requested and to scheduling reports in a more staggered manner.

12. The Governing Council may wish to consider the following additional steps:

(a) Documents which are submitted for the information of the Council could be distributed officially in the languages in summary form, not to exceed five pages, with the remaining information provided in English only, as background;

(b) The biennialization called for by former decisions of the Council could be more fully implemented, as mentioned in paragraph 9. This would lead to a reduction in the documentation on funds and programmes under the supervision of the Council;

(c) The reintroduction of the ideas contained in paragraphs 2 to 4 of annex B of decision 87/1, which established a system of grouping various items foreseen under an agenda item into a single report. This could involve three reports, as follows:

(i) Annual review of programme and project activities (e.g., for 1990, the reports on the implementation of country programmes, now foreseen as four separate reports under agenda item 5 (b) could have been incorporated into appropriate sections of the annual report of the Administrator. This idea was raised in the informal consultation on 13 February 1990);

(ii) Annual review of thematic programmes established by the Council (in 1990, this could have included NGOs and grass-roots organizations, and women in development);

(iii) Implementation of the programming cycle and other resource utilization;

(d) Decision 81/37 initiated a system of indicative quotas dividing documentation into policy, support and country programme documents. While experience with indicative quota systems has not always been encouraging, it might be useful to test this approach once again by setting a firm quota for 1991. The Bureau of the Council may be charged with monitoring this process throughout the year;

(e) An even greater effort to produce concise, factual and action-oriented reports will have to be made.