

12 March 2012

English only

**Committee on the Peaceful
Uses of Outer Space**

Legal Subcommittee

Fifty-first session

Vienna, 19-30 March 2012

**Proposals to the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer
Space for new items to be considered by the Legal
Subcommittee at its fifty-second session**

Organizational matters

I. Introduction

1. At its fiftieth session, in 2011, the Legal Subcommittee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space agreed that the Secretariat should prepare, for consideration by the Subcommittee at its next session, a conference room paper providing information on good practices used by other comparable United Nations entities on the structure of reports of intergovernmental bodies (see A/AC.105/990, para. 196). The Subcommittee also agreed that the bulletin of the Director-General and Executive Director on standards for the preparation and submission of manuscripts of United Nations documents and publications, dated 4 March 2010 (UNOV/DGB.22-UNODC/EDB.22), should be made available to the Subcommittee.
2. The present conference room paper contains an overview of the submission standards and drafting guidelines contained in the bulletin of the Director-General and Executive Director. The bulletin of the Director-General and Executive Director will be made available to the Subcommittee at its fifty-first session.
3. The present paper also provides information on the reporting practices of other Vienna-based intergovernmental bodies that, like the Committee and its Subcommittees report directly to the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council.



II. Bulletin of the Director-General and Executive Director (UNOV/DGB.22-UNODC/EDB.22)

4. Annex I of the bulletin of the Director-General and Executive Director lays out general submission standards for documents and publications. Paragraph 1 (g) states that “summaries of deliberations in reports of conferences, meetings, workshops, symposiums, seminars, training courses etc. should be in reported speech and, even in the absence of summary records, should be concise”.

5. Annex II of the bulletin contains an interoffice memorandum dated 21 April 2004 from the Secretary-General, including the following drafting guidelines for reports not totally within the purview of the Secretariat:

Reports (including those of intergovernmental/expert bodies) should be “action-oriented” and limited to:

- 1) A brief discussion on organizational and procedural matters
- 2) Recommendations, including resolutions and decisions adopted
- 3) Policy recommendations emanating from multi-stakeholder dialogues and panels and roundtables rather than summaries of the meetings
- 4) New developments, findings and recommendations, particularly for recurrent reports
- 5) Quotations from United Nations official documents only when citing legislative authority

Reports should not include:

- 1) Summary of statements made at opening and closing meetings, unless pertinent to conclusions reached
- 2) Summaries of statements by individuals, preferring instead to list speakers for each item
- 3) General summary of statements under each item
- 4) Analysis or information provided unless required to support policy findings
- 5) Lengthy discussion on organizational and procedural matters
- 6) Repetition of already published texts or repetition of texts with only minor changes
- 7) Extraneous information that doesn't contribute to deliberations

6. The bulletin also contains information on the standards on the length of documents. Paragraph 13 lays out the standards for documents originating in the Secretariat:

Documents originating in the Secretariat should be no longer than 8,500 words (General Assembly resolution 52/214 B), including footnotes and other references. Any document exceeding that limit must be submitted to the Documents Management Unit with a waiver, to be obtained from the Assistant Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management.

Submitting officers are encouraged to contact the Documents Management Unit well before requesting a waiver in order to explore whether measures might be taken to shorten the document.

7. Paragraph 14 of the bulletin provides for standards for reports of intergovernmental bodies:

Reports of subsidiary bodies, special rapporteurs and the like must not exceed 10,700 words (General Assembly resolution 52/214 B),[†] including footnotes and other references. For documents exceeding that limit, submitting officers should contact the Documents Management Unit well in advance of requesting the waiver from the Assistant Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management. Doing so will enable the submitting office to identify, at an early stage, the steps that need to be taken in order to prepare reports, including those issued on behalf of intergovernmental and expert bodies, in accordance with the guidelines from the Secretary-General dated 21 April 2004.

8. In recent years, the word count of reports of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space has been as follows:

2009: 18,556 words (A/64/20)

2010: 19,474 words (A/65/20)

2011: 24,060 words (A/66/20)

The word count of reports of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee has been as follows:

2009: 14,311 words (A/AC.105/933)

2010: 15,562 words (A/AC.105/958)

2011: 19,531 words (A/AC.105/987)

The word count of the reports of the Legal Subcommittee has been as follows:

2009: 14,908 words (A/AC.105/935)

2010: 14,331 words (A/AC.105/942)

2011: 14,854 words (A/AC.105/990)

[†] In its resolution 52/214 B, General Assembly referred to 16 pages with regard to documents originating in the Secretariat and to 20 pages with regard to documents of intergovernmental bodies. Subsequently, the Assistant Secretary-General of the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management decided, in his interoffice memorandum of 15 October 2002 on the application of page limits for reports, that the word count equivalent of 16 pages was 8,500 words and the word count equivalent of 20 pages was 10,700 words.

III. Information on the reporting practices of other United Nations entities

A. Official Records of the Economic and Social Council

9. The table below shows the length of the 2011 reports of most of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council. It also shows that the three longest reports are those that are currently not action-oriented.

<i>Functional commission</i>	<i>Document symbol</i>	<i>Length (words)</i>	<i>Total report length (words)</i>
Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice	E/2011/30	32 522	39 419*
	E/2011/30/Add.1	6 897	
Commission on Narcotic Drugs	E/2011/28	24 926	31 872*
	E/2011/28/Add.1	6 946	
Commission on Sustainable Development	E/2011/29	27 801	27 801*
Commission on the Status of Women	E/2011/27	19 270	19 270
Commission for Social Development	E/2011/26	11 715	11 941
	E/2011/26/Corr.1	226	
Statistical Commission	E/2011/24	11 651	11 651
Commission on Science and Technology for Development	E/2011/31	11 261	11 261
Commission on Population and Development	E/2011/25	10 118	10 118

* Report is currently not action-oriented.

1. Report of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs

10. From 2009 to 2011, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs reduced the length of its report by 49.7 per cent, from 63,333 words[‡] to 31,872 words.[§] The summary of debate on recurring and one-time agenda items was condensed. Also, the length of the report was significantly reduced as a result of the decision to no longer include financial statements (on draft resolutions and draft decisions) in annexes to the report. The statements are now instead issued in a conference room paper, in English only, available on the website of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

11. In its current form, each chapter of the report of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs dealing with a specific agenda item has an introductory part, consisting of a list of documents considered and statements made during deliberations. This is followed by a section entitled “Deliberations”, which contains a summary of the views expressed during the deliberations on the item. If there are any decisions or

[‡] E/2009/28 and Add.1.

[§] E/2011/28 and Add.1.

recommendations adopted by the Commission on the agenda item in question, they are presented at the end of each chapter, in a section entitled “Action taken by the Commission”.

12. In 2010, the Extended Bureau of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (composed of the Chairperson, three Vice-Chairpersons, one Rapporteur, and the Chairpersons of the five regional groups, the European Union and the Group of 77 and China) decided to have action-oriented reports starting in 2013. Such reports will include in each chapter a list of documents considered and a list of statements made and will record decisions taken by the Commission and any recommendations for future action. Summaries of the deliberations will no longer be included in the report, but may be issued in a conference room paper or be made available on the website of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

2. Report of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

13. From 2009 to 2011, the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice reduced the length of its report by 16.1 per cent, from 46,992** to 39,419.†† The report of the Crime Commission, like the report of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs was significantly shortened as a result of the decision to no longer include the financial statements in annexes to the report.

14. The report of the Crime Commission has always had the same format as the report of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

15. In 2012, the Extended Bureau of the Crime Commission decided that the reports of the Crime Commission, like the reports of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, will be action-oriented, starting in 2013 (see paras. 5 and 12 above).

B. Official Records of the General Assembly

Report of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law

16. The United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL), like the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, reports directly to the General Assembly. In 2011, after UNCITRAL had adopted its sessional report (A/66/17), the UNCITRAL secretariat agreed to shorten the report to 62,939 words, including the 60-page UNCITRAL Model Law on Public Procurement.

17. In 2011, the UNCITRAL secretariat also agreed to make the sessional reports of UNCITRAL more action-oriented, starting in 2012, by shortening or eliminating the summarized deliberations but including informal decisions or statements related to activities to be undertaken at future sessions (e.g. “It was decided that ...”, “It was agreed that at its next session ...”).

** E/2009/30 and Add.1.

†† E/2011/30 and Add.1.