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ADMINISTRATIVE INSTRUCTION

To: Members of the staff concerned
with the issuance of publications

From: The Under-Secretary-General for
Conference Services and Special
Assignments

Subject: REGULATIONS FOR THE CONTROL AND LIMITATION OF DOCUMENTATION

Addendum

CRITERIA FOR THE SELECTION OF MATERIAL TO BE ISSUED AS
UNITED NATIONS PUBLICATIONS

1. Hitherto, publications issued under the imprint of the United Nations as part of the programme approved by the Publications Board have been issued as sales publications. The present instruction establishes criteria for selecting material to be issued as sales or non-sales publications and formalizes procedures for the review and clearance of texts proposed for publication.
2. The procedures set forth in this paper relate mainly to studies and reports. They do not apply to official records, which the United Nations has an archival duty to issue, to recurrent publications or to documents with regard to the publication of which specific instructions have been given by an intergovernmental body.

Criteria

3. A document may be considered for issuance as a United Nations publication if it is of public interest, reaches a standard of intellectual endeavour that reflects credit on the United Nations and does not substantially duplicate material that has already been published. There must also be some reasonable expectation of positive advantage to the United Nations in terms of greater public awareness of the work of the United Nations or of providing practical assistance to the membership of the United Nations, such as by the publication of technical manuals or handbooks. The prospect of sales revenue should not be the main determining factor.

Decision to publish

4. The decision whether or not a study should be published should be made at two stages. First, if a programme is likely to result in studies which will meet the criteria given in paragraph 3 above, tentative provision for publication should be included in the programme budget. Second, when the study is completed, it should be subject to critical review and certified by the department concerned as suitable for publication. The certification should give an indication of the degree of interests likely to be shown by Governments, professional and academic groups and the general public.

5. At the second stage, it should be decided also whether the study is to be a sales or non-sales publication. The form of publication is a matter for administrative decision based on consideration of economy and of estimated sales potential. Several cases may be distinguished.

(a) If the study is being issued as a document of an intergovernmental body, it is given general distribution, which in itself constitutes publication and assures the official distribution that separate publication would provide. Such a document would not normally be reissued as a publication. Departmental and sales distribution to the extent required can be provided for by run-on copies. Arrangements should be made in good time with the Sales Section. In appropriate cases, covers and title-pages or self-covers can be provided.

(b) If the study meets the criteria given in paragraph 3 above but is not to be presented to an intergovernmental body, if the main purpose of publication is to bring the study to the attention of official and departmental recipients and if sales interest is expected to be minimal, then the study should be issued as a non-sales item. The main responsibility for getting it into the hands of the readership sought - officials in government departments, academic persons active in the field etc. - would be undertaken by the author unit through departmental distribution. The study would bear a document symbol in the appropriate ST/ ... series but not a sales number. Other requests for copies of the publication would normally be dealt with by the Office of Public Information and would be honoured free of charge or at a nominal fee to cover costs of handling.

(c) If the study is considered by the Sales Section to have a substantial sales potential and if it meets the criteria given in paragraph 3 above, it should be issued as a United Nations publication, with a sales number and sales price. As a working rule, an anticipated sale of fewer than 500 copies in English should be regarded as "minimal"; if only a minimal sales interest is expected, the study should not normally be issued as a sales publication.

(d) If the study is considered by the Sales Section to have a minimal sales potential and if it meets the criteria given in paragraph 3 above, the possibility of external publication should be considered.

6. The inclusion of an item in the approved publications programme constitutes approval in principle for publication in one of the above forms. Actual publication takes place only after review and certification by the author department concerned and concurrence of the Publications Board, which, in questionable cases, would act on the report of its Consultative Committee on Publications.