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PUBLICATIONS AND DOCUMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

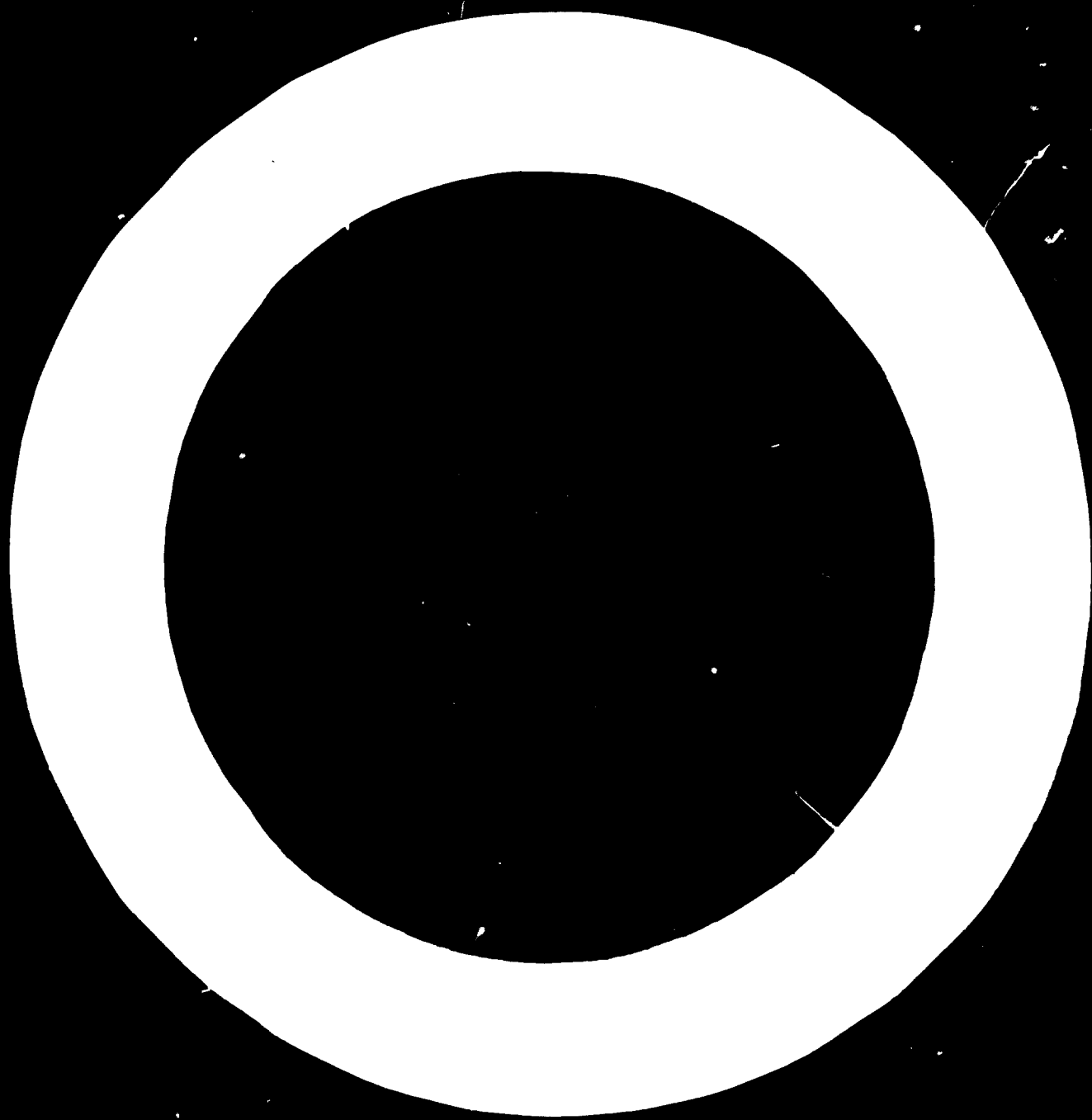
Note by the Secretary-General

(A/INF/124)

The attached document is presented to the members of the Industrial Development Board in accordance with paragraph 2 of General Assembly resolution 2292 (XXII) of 9 December 1967.

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We regret that some of the pages in the microfiche copy of this report may not be up to the proper legibility standards, even though the best possible copy was used for preparing the master fiche.





UNITED NATIONS
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PUBLICATIONS AND DOCUMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Note by the Secretary-General

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. POLICY OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY REGARDING THE CONTROL AND LIMITATION OF DOCUMENTATION	2
III. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY	3
A. Records of meetings	4
(1) Summary records	4
(2) Verbatim records	4
B. Sessional reports	5
C. Annexes	5
D. Supplements	6
E. Technical papers	6
F. Studies and reports	6
G. Procedures for the implementation of documentation policies to be applied by United Nations organs	7
IV. COST OF PRODUCING DOCUMENTS	8
A. Translation	9
B. Meeting records	11
(1) Provisional records	11
(2) Final records	12
C. Illustrative break-down of costs	13

I. INTRODUCTION

1. By paragraph 1 of General Assembly resolution 2292 (XXII) of 7 December 1967, the Secretary-General was requested:

"(a) To prepare a standard, concise document setting forth the policies laid down by the General Assembly regarding the control and limitation of documentation, including the provisions approved in paragraph 1 above, the cost of producing documents and such other information as might be pertinent;

"(b) To present the document referred to in sub-paragraph (a) above to members prior to each session of a council, board, commission, committee or other body."

This note is accordingly being distributed to all Member States as a General Assembly information document and will also be made available at the opening meeting of each body of the United Nations.

II. POLICY OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY REGARDING THE CONTROL AND LIMITATION OF DOCUMENTATION

2. The volume of United Nations documentation has been of concern to the General Assembly since the early days of the Organization. The reason for this concern is threefold:

(a) The heavy cost which such documentation entails;^{1/}

(b) The fact that many Governments may find it difficult "to study it, co-ordinate the views of interested departments on it, and brief their representatives in such a manner as to enable them to participate fully in the discussions in the various meetings";^{2/} and

(c) The inability of the Secretariat to cope with the documentation requirements in such a manner as to ensure that documents are available in good time, and in the necessary language versions, so that the work of the various bodies can proceed smoothly.

The third reason has assumed increasing importance as the work of the Organization has expanded and new organs have been established.

^{1/} See paragraphs 7, 23 and 24 below.

^{2/} Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-first Session, Annexes, agenda item 80, document A/6343, para. 101.

3. The difficulty described in (c) above pertains both to substantive departments and to the technical and language services. In informing the General Assembly in 1966 that he could not give the assurance, in respect of the 1967 calendar of meetings, that pre-session documentation in the required languages could be provided in good time, the Secretary-General stated:

"Apart from the reservations made in respect of the capacity of the technical and language services, there is, of course, a further important element on which the success of this conference programme depends, and on which, similarly, no assurance can be given at this stage. Reference is made in this regard to the ability of the substantive departments concerned to provide the necessary basic pre-conference documentation soon enough to allow for translation, typing, reproduction and distribution in good time prior to the meeting to which it relates. A programme of the order of magnitude as that now foreseen will place a considerable burden on the substantive staff. If, for practical reasons, the time for submission of texts cannot be met, the technical services will of necessity be unable to fulfil their obligations." 3/

4. In the light of its concern, the General Assembly has on a number of occasions called for: (a) restraint on the part of delegations in requesting reports and studies and meeting records, and (b) care on the part of the Secretariat in drafting documentation to the end that it should be concise and as brief as possible to cover the subject. It has also on two occasions adopted resolutions stating its policy on specific types of documentation: in 1958, when it considered the report of the Committee on the Control and Limitation of Documentation,^{4/} and in 1967 when it considered a report of the Secretary-General.^{5/} As was stated in the Secretary-General's report, some of his recommendations repeated decisions taken by the General Assembly on the earlier occasion.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

5. The specific recommendations contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution 2292 (XXII) approved in 1967, together with those of 1958 which are

3/ Ibid., agenda item 75, para. 5.

4/ Ibid., Thirteenth Session, Annexes, agenda item 51, document A/3888.

5/ Ibid., Twenty-second Session, Annexes, agenda item 81, document A/6675.

pertinent and which were not repeated,^{6/} are listed below, arranged by topics under explanatory headings.

A. Records of meetings

(1) Summary records

Whether they could be dispensed with:

"Any organ establishing an ad hoc committee or other subsidiary body should be invited to consider whether the nature and objectives of the proceedings of that body might not allow that summary records for its meetings be dispensed with, relying on an adequate reflection of views expressed and decisions reached in its final report, or that minutes only be provided. Established bodies receiving summary records (or their parent bodies) should be invited to re-examine their need for summary records in this light."

Maximum length:

"The length of summary records for any single two-and-a-half hour meeting should not exceed fifteen pages unless exceptional circumstances so require."

Statements not to be reproduced in extenso:

"Statements made in meetings by representatives, members of the Secretariat, or others should not be reproduced in extenso in summary records, or as separate documents, unless a decision to that effect is taken by the body concerned after a statement of the financial implications involved has been submitted in accordance with regulation 13.1 of the Financial Regulations of the United Nations."

(2) Verbatim records

Provision strictly limited:

"The provision of verbatim records should be strictly limited. No extension of verbatim records beyond present arrangements shall be made unless the General Assembly so decides, with full knowledge of the financial implications involved."

^{6/} The 1958 recommendations, which are extracted from paragraph 27 of the report of the Committee on Control and Limitation of Documentation, as approved by General Assembly resolution 1272 (XIII), are identified by an asterisk.

B. Sessional reports

Material not to be included:

"Verbatim or summary records of an organ, or extracts therefrom, should not be included in its report.

"The reproduction in the body of a report of summaries of views that have already been set forth in the records should be allowed only in exceptional cases and after the need to do so has been clearly demonstrated and approved by the organ concerned, the financial implications having been brought to its attention."

General drafting principles:

"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;

"Reports should become more and more concise as questions progress upwards from bodies of less to bodies of greater authority;

"The distinction between records of meetings and reports on the consideration of agenda items should be preserved." *

Early submission a necessity:

"Reports of subsidiary bodies should be submitted in good time so that the issuance of those reports, first in provisional form, and later in final printed form, may be avoided."

C. Annexes

Selection of material:

"The substantive departments concerned should strictly limit the number and length of the documents they select for inclusion in the annexes to those essential for the understanding of the relevant discussion. Further, as a specific point, no document which is already, or will be, printed or reproduced by the internal offset process should be included in the annexes. Equally, the inclusion of a document in an annex should exclude it from any separate printing or reproduction by internal offset later."

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Contents and costs subject to approval:

"The contents of the annexes and their production costs should be reviewed periodically by the Publications Board." V

D. Supplements

List subject to approval:

"The list of documents intended for issue as supplements should be reviewed and approved periodically by the Publications Board."

Normally to be reproduced internally in a single form:

"All supplements should be considered for reproduction internally by offset printing from typescripts, with the exception of reports of the main organs, volumes of resolutions and certain others which for technical reasons may not lend themselves to internal reproduction. This should apply to versions in English, French, Spanish and Russian. A study should also be made to determine the extent to which Chinese versions may feasibly be reproduced internally from calligraphy.

"The reproduction of supplements in both a preliminary and a final form should be limited to cases of strict necessity, for example, when a final version of a particular report cannot be produced in time for adequate consideration by the body to which it is submitted."

E. Technical papers

Selective reproduction:

"The present practice under which the technical papers submitted for conferences, seminars and workshops are reproduced in printed form should be modified to the end that wherever possible only selected papers or summaries would be printed."

F. Studies and reports

Possibility of reducing the frequency of reports:

"Organs of the United Nations should be invited to undertake a general revision of resolutions and rules requiring frequent reports, with a view to considering whether such reports could not be issued at longer intervals." *

V The Publications Board is an inter-departmental body which determines, within the Secretariat, and ensures the implementation of, the policies governing the preparation, production, distribution and sale of documents.

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Procedures for material contributed from outside the Secretariat:

"In the case of the provision, from sources outside the Secretariat, of material for inclusion in a single study or report, the Secretariat would be assisted in their efforts to keep documentation within planned limits if the following procedures were adopted:

- (i) The issuance, by organs in which the request for the report or study originates, of clear directives as to the form and volume it is desirable for the report or studies to have.
- (ii) The casting of such requests, wherever appropriate, in the form of questionnaires, bearing in mind that carefully formulated questions tend to elicit pertinent replies and that the submission of material on the basis of responses to set questions facilitates their incorporation in a single document. This suggestion would be without prejudice to the right of such contributors to present their answers to the questions raised in whatever form would, in their view, be required in their particular case;
- (iii) An appeal to contributors in each case to endeavour to keep their contributions within the requested limits." *

Treatment of replies of Governments submitted in response to resolutions:

"Replies of Governments submitted in response to specific resolutions should, wherever possible, be grouped in one compilation or in periodic compilations, rather than issued as separate documents."

G. Procedures for the implementation of documentation policies to be applied by United Nations organs

Proposals involving documentation to be covered by statement of financial implications:

"Full use should be made, as regards proposals involving documentation, of article 13.1 of the Financial Regulations of the United Nations (General Assembly resolution 456 (V), annex) and of the relevant provisions of the rules of procedure of United Nations organs. To this end, the statement of the Secretary-General on administrative and financial implications, including the documentary implications, should always be submitted to the Council, Commission or other competent body in good time before this organ takes a decision, and its President or Chairman should duly draw the attention of its members to the existence of the statement." *

Control and limitation of documentation to be kept under constant review:

"The attention of all organs of the United Nations should be drawn to the objectives of reduction of documentation set forth in resolution 1205 (XII)

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and they should be invited to consider the desirability of placing on their agenda at their next session, and thereafter as necessary, an item relating to the control and limitation of their own documentation."*

6. In resolution 2292 (XXII), the General Assembly also requested the Secretary-General:

(a) "To take all measures to ensure a more effective presentation and communication of the documents in due time and simultaneously in the working languages, as envisaged in the different regulations of the organs of the United Nations;" and

(b) "To ensure that no effort is spared within the Secretariat to carry out the recommendations contained in his report..."

Lastly, in paragraph 3 of its resolution, the General Assembly:

"Urges the representatives of Member States and all other members of commissions, committees and other bodies to co-operate fully in carrying out the policies laid down by the General Assembly in this respect."

IV. COST OF PRODUCING DOCUMENTS

7. The total cost to the United Nations of providing the pre-session, in-session and post-session documentation of its various bodies is somewhat difficult to calculate with any precision. As a general indication, table A in annex I to the 1968 budget estimates^{8/} gives figures of \$16,957,000 as the 1968 cost of conference services at Headquarters and Geneva and \$3,010,400 as the cost for special conferences and meetings. A further figure of \$1,057,700 was included for Official Records in the estimates for contractual printing. The first two figures include a number of expenses (such as interpretation, meetings service officers, etc.) not specifically related to documentation; on the other hand, the documentation services of the regional economic commissions are not included. In most general terms, the cost of the conference service expenses (as distinct

^{8/} Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-second Session, Supplement No. 5 (A/6705).

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.

8. As regards particular documentation services, it may be useful to provide certain information on the processes involved, giving cost figures later. The information is based on Headquarters experience and is repeated from material provided the Committee on Conferences and thus refers to conferences; the processes are, however, the same for meetings of other bodies.

A. Translation

9. Translation, in United Nations usage, means the written rendering of a text in another language. As a normal rule, translation is carried out in two stages: (a) translation of the original text into the language required; (b) revision of the translations. Revision is necessary (i) to ensure accuracy of the original translation and its conformity with United Nations terminology and usage and (ii) to ensure consistency of style, particularly since sections of a single document have to be given to several translators for the initial translation. On an average, translation requires two-and-a-half times as long as revision. Several years ago this ratio was generally three to one, but the increasingly technical and specialized subjects being dealt with have increased the relative time required for revision.

10. Typists are required to prepare both translators' drafts and the final revised texts of translations and to read and correct them as necessary. The ratio of typists to translators is roughly one to one.

11. In most general terms and in normal conditions, where strict specialization is not possible, a translator might produce from three or four pages^{2/} a day of difficult technical text and up to eight or nine pages a day of easy text. For estimating purposes, taking into account actual experience, one might take as an average five pages a day. On this basis, for a conference for which 2,000 pages of pre-session documentation are envisaged, some 400 man-days of translation time would be required for each language. To this, using the ratios mentioned

^{2/} The term "page" as used in this note refers to the standard typewritten page, which, in English, contains about 330 words.

above, some 160 man-days of revision time would have to be added, as well as 400 man-days of typing. In this example, if the pre-session documentation is to be issued in four languages (original plus three others), the requirement in man-days would be 1,200 for translation; 480 for revision; and 1,400 (including original) for typing.

12. The above describes the process and requirements for translation by the regular staff. However, the capacity of that staff at present levels is not sufficient to accommodate the workload emanating from the regular programme of meetings and the publications programme. Therefore, it has become increasingly necessary in recent years to have recourse to contractual translation for the regular programme and to provide for contractual translation of all pre-session documentation of special conferences, except in cases where such documentation is negligible in amount.

13. A point must, however, be emphasized with regard to the ability to arrange for contractual translation. While some progress has been made in obtaining or establishing such arrangements, the fact remains that contractual translation is most suitable when there is no specific deadline for the compilation of the translation or when there is at least a substantial interval between the date of receipt of the material for translation and the date on which it is needed. In cases where the agenda and type of documentation required for a particular conference are known well in advance, schedules for the submission of the documentation can be prepared which, theoretically, should make it possible to arrange contractual translation. However, even when the plans in this respect are known and a schedule for the submission of documents has been prepared, delays occur in the delivery of the material for translation. It may become impossible if serious delays occur and if the volume of material involved is great, to obtain translations by contractual means on time. This may result in the necessity of using regular staff resources to the detriment of other documentation.

14. As regards in-session documentation requiring translation, it is of course necessary to have the staff needed for this purpose at the place of the conference. Since in-session documentation is for the most part urgent, the major factors in determining the number of such staff are the anticipated average number of

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pages to be processed per day and the number of languages. The provision of in-session documentation of 25 pages per day in four languages (original and three others) would on the average involve the assignment of 15 translators, 6 revisers and 17 typists (the latter figure including staff for typing the original).

B. Meeting records

15. Meeting records usually take the form of verbatim or summary records, the latter representing the type most frequently provided. Both are subsequently issued first in provisional and then in final form.

(1) Provisional records

16. A verbatim record contains in written form the entire proceedings of a meeting, word by word, as spoken. The verbatim record of a meeting of two and one-half to three hours' duration would average 50-60 typewritten pages in the standard format. Most verbatim reporting in the United Nations is done by a process providing "immediate copy", i.e. the transcript of a given meeting is made to a schedule by which it will be completed on stencils, or ready for reproduction not more than one and one-half hours after the end of the meeting and thus for distribution to delegations within a few hours after the meeting.

17. To maintain this schedule it is necessary to have a team of not less than eight reporters for each language in which the record is to be issued, each team working on a time-table of ten-minute "takes". The ratio of typists to verbatim reporters is one to one. A meeting for which the verbatim record is to be taken in three languages, for instance, requires a team of twenty-four verbatim reporters and twenty-seven typists, the latter figure including one co-ordinator per group.

18. Verbatim records can also be produced by transcription from sound recordings. This method requires that the meeting be recorded in each of the languages in which the written record is to be provided, using interpretations of speeches made in other than the original language. The sound recordings are then transcribed by senior typists, who are assisted by translators who have monitored

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the meeting. For each language, two monitors and eight verbatim transcribers are assigned. Thus, for a meeting to be provided with verbatim records in three languages, six "monitors" and twenty-four verbatim transcribers are required. This method of producing verbatim records is slower than the one employing verbatim reporters so that while the verbatim reporting teams can service two meetings a day without excessive overtime, the transcription teams would for a continuing schedule of meetings, serve one. Thus, the number of teams required would be dictated more by the number of meetings per day than by the number of simultaneous meetings.

19. A summary record of a meeting reproduces in summarized form the substance of its proceedings. A summary record is usually one quarter to one third the length of a verbatim record; the average length of a summary record of a meeting is some fifteen pages for a two-and-a-half-hour meeting.

20. Summary records are prepared by précis-writers who, in the United Nations, are normally also translators. As a rule a team of three précis-writers covers each meeting. Such a team drafts a summary in half a day. The draft summary records are corrected by a reviser before being stencilled. The schedule is geared to the distribution of the provisional summary record in its original language within forty-eight hours after the meeting. The translation of summary records is undertaken and organized with a view to issuance within seventy-two hours after the meeting.

21. The preparation of the original language version of the summary record of a meeting therefore requires a full day's assignment of three précis-writers; its translation requires two translators for each language into which the record is to be translated. The revision of the original requires half a reviser's day as does the revision of each translation. The typing of the drafts and the stencilling of the final texts of a fifteen-page summary record require three typists for each language. Thus, a "team" for providing a summary record of one meeting a day in three languages would be composed of 7 translator/précis-writers; 1-1/2 revisers; and 9 typists.

(2) Final records

22. The descriptions above regarding the provision of verbatim and summary records relate only to the operations during a session; in both cases the output

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during the session is considered provisional and further action is required to establish the final record:

(a) In the case of verbatim records, the provisional version in a particular language contains the interpretations into that language of speeches made in other languages. To establish the final verbatim record in that language it is necessary to translate the speeches made in other languages from their respective originals. Moreover, delegations and other participants may submit corrections to the provisional record which have to be taken into account in establishing the final record;

(b) In the case of summary records, the corrections submitted by participants must be reflected, new translations made of those portions of the record, and the final text edited and reproduced.

The amount of work involved in these operations is not measurable in the same standard terms as that for the preparation of the provisional records. As a minimum, the preparation of final verbatim records requires translation from the language of the original speech into each other language of the records. Thus, twenty meetings would give rise to, say, 1,000 pages of records in one language. If the records are to be issued in three languages, this would result in 2,000 pages of translation if all interventions were in those three languages; this figure would be increased by the number and length of interventions in languages other than one of the three involved. The amount of work involved in editing and entering corrections would depend on the circumstances of each case. As regards summary records, the amount of translation, editing and other work involved in establishing the final record depends largely on the number of corrections received, although a certain amount of editing and retyping is involved in any case. Corrections to summary records are, however, more frequent and extensive than those to verbatim records, since in the abridgement of the discussion the précis-writers have to make a selection as to the main substance and intent of the interventions.

C. Illustrative break-down of costs

23. Generally using the examples given above, and including an element for the expenses of reproduction, the calculated costs of documentation in each case would be of the following order:

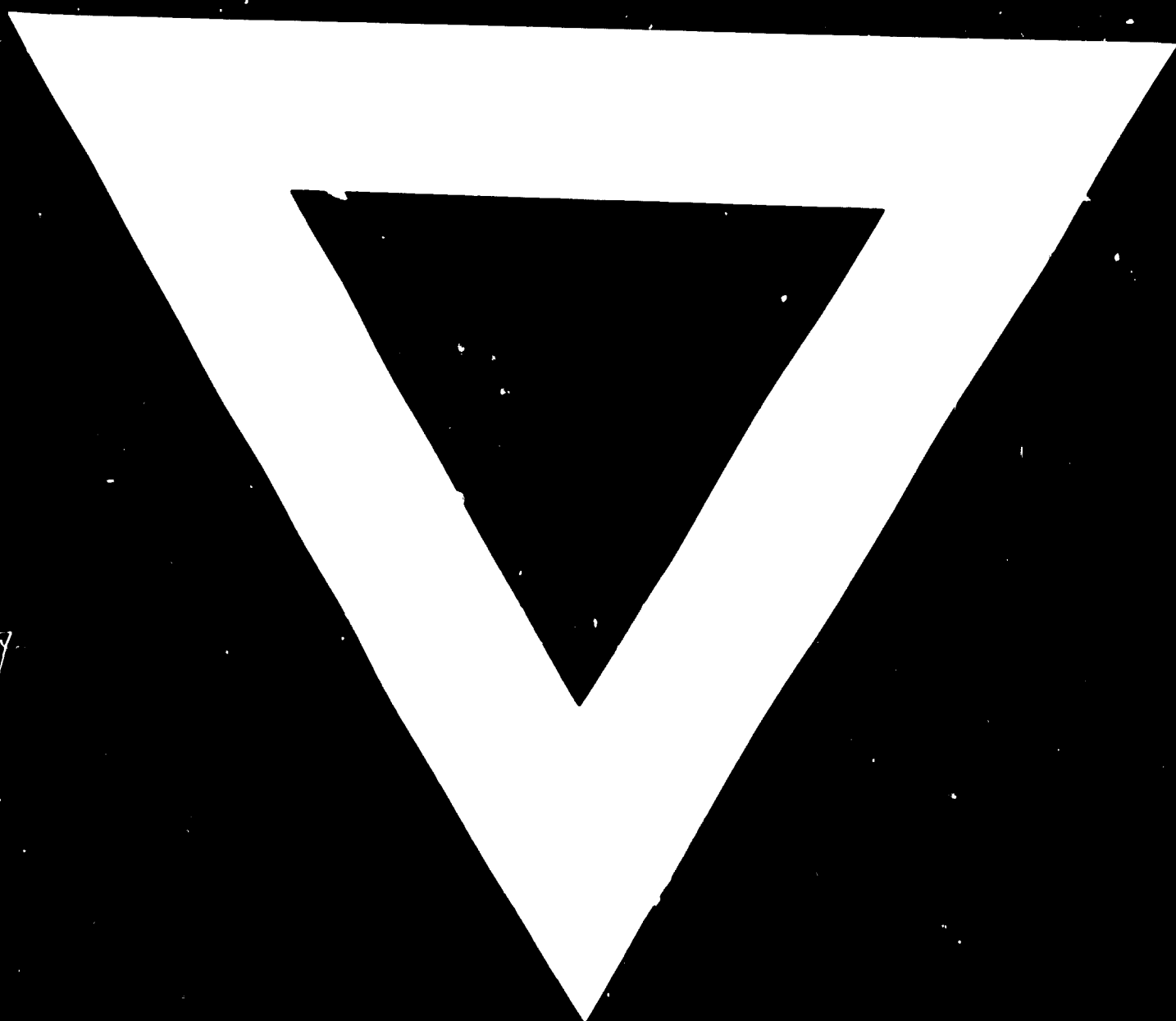
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- (a) Production of 25,000 pages of pre-session documentation in four languages (original plus three others) \$193,800
- (b) Provision of 10 pages of in-session documentation per day for a session of three weeks, in four languages \$ 13,500
- (c) Provision of a verbatim record for one meeting in three languages - using the "immediate copy" procedure \$ 3,810
- (d) Provision of a summary record for one meeting in three languages \$ 1,120

The above figures are the calculated costs of the internal translation, précis-writing, typing and reproduction services required, except that the translation costs involved in establishing the final texts of verbatim records have been estimated on the basis of contractual translation. They do not include editing, distribution or certain other operations involved, nor any element of overhead, nor, as indicated previously, any factor for the cost of substantive preparation.

24. As regards statements made in meetings which, in accordance with the recommendation contained in paragraph (b) of the annex to General Assembly resolution 2292 (XXII) (see paragraph 5 above), "should not be reproduced in extenso in summary records, or as separate documents, unless a decision to that effect is taken by the body concerned after a statement of the financial implications has been submitted", it may be pointed out, as a general indication based on the figures in paragraph 23 (b) above, that the circulation of a statement of ten pages in four languages involves a cost in terms of the value of internal services of the order of \$900.





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