

18 April 2018

Excellency,

I have the pleasure to forward herewith a letter dated 17 April 2018 from the co-chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly (AHWG), H.E. Mr. Vladimir Drobnjak, Permanent Representative of Croatia, and H.E. Ms. María Emma Mejía Vélez, Permanent Representative of Colombia, transmitting the written summary of the interactive dialogue between the Permanent Missions and the Secretariat held on 5 April 2018, as well as the presentation delivered by the Office of Human Resources Management on 16 April 2018.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Miroslav Lajčák

To All Permanent Representatives and Permanent Observers to the United Nations New York





17 April 2018

Excellency,

We are addressing you in our capacity as Co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly (AHWG). In line with paragraph 12 of General Assembly resolution 71/323, we have the pleasure to circulate a written summary of the interactive dialogue between the Permanent Missions and the Secretariat held on 5 April.

Additionally, we also enclose herewith the presentation on the gender parity and geographical origin of the UN Secretariat, as delivered by the Office of Human Resources Management on 16 April.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

María Emma Mejía Vélez

Ambassador and Permanent Representative

of Colombia

Vladimir Drobnjak

Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Croatia

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To: All Permanent Representatives and Permanent Observers to the United Nations, New York

#### **OVERVIEW**

# AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON THE REVITALIZATION OF THE WORK OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY – CONTINUATION OF THE INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE BETWEEN PERMANENT MISSIONS AND THE SECRETARIAT 5 APRIL 2018

- 1. On 5 April 2018, the Co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly (AHWG) during the 72<sup>nd</sup> session convened an informal (closed) meeting for a continuation of the **interactive dialogue between Permanent Missions and the Secretariat** as mandated by paragraph 10 of resolution 71/323. A total of 10 delegations intervened (including on behalf of a group of Member States). The Secretariat was represented by the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM), the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security (DSS), the Director of the Facilities and Commercial Services Division of the Department of Management (DM) and the Director of the News and Media Division of the Department of Public Information (DPI). Preceding the interactive segment, the Under-Secretary-General of DGACM updated the Working Group on the follow-up actions taken by the Department pursuant to resolution 71/323 with a view to identifying solutions to better meet the needs and requirements of the Permanent Missions.
- 2. In her presentation, the Under-Secretary-General focused on the one-stop-shop concept; the Journal of the United Nations; and the provision of e-services to facilitate delegates' daily work. Regarding the former, DGACM had launched gMeets, also known as the one-stop-shop portal, which functions as a single-entry point to submit requests for meetings services. Through an easy-to-use self-service web interface, clients now had the flexibility to select from a range of services, including conference room allocation; interpretation; nameplates, podium signs and room set-up; publishing material in the Journal of the United Nations; audiovisual services; webcast services; and access and security-related services and loaning of technological equipment. Background information and cost estimates were made readily available to facilitate informed decisions by requesters. The much-improved user experience would help facilitate the work of all Permanent Missions, in particular the smaller Missions. More than 200 requests from more than 70 different clients – including Permanent Missions, groups of Member States, UN Secretariat entities as well as specialized agencies – had been processed since its launch. Phase II would include the expansion of the service catalogue by adding other non-meeting related requests, such as special events, exhibits, receptions. During phase III, the system would be rolled out at UNOG, UNOV and UNON as well as Regional Commissions.
- 3. Regarding the *Journal of the United Nations* ("the Journal"), it had been made available as of the beginning of the year in a multilingual digital version that was compatible with tablets and smart phones, in accordance with the decisions taken by the General Assembly in resolution 71/323. This was in addition to the PDF version which continued to be published. The digital version already had been accessed by some 34,000 distinct users who had browsed in excess of 560,000 pages. Nearly 30% of the total usage had been on either a smartphone or a tablet. While work on the digital version was ongoing, and critical

functionalities were being added on an ongoing basis, significant improvements had already been made to the production cycle since its launch. So far, the feedback received had been positive. Responding to the Assembly's request to provide a tool to allow Member States to upload and publish information about side events organized by them at United Nations Headquarters, the digital Journal allowed Permanent Missions to submit announcements of such events to the Journal Unit for posting online. Other new services included the subsequent uploading of summaries to past issues of the digital version of the Journal after a meeting had taken place. Users may also share information and add meetings from the digital Journal directly to their personal calendars. From the digital Journal site, users had archival access to past issues of the PDF version of the Journal, which may serve informational as well as academic and research purposes.

- 4. In addition, DGACM was working on an advanced search feature to enable users to research past, present and future meetings and topics. Noting the Assembly's call upon all relevant intergovernmental bodies to review the need for and content of the Journal summaries of their meetings and other announcements and to take the necessary steps, it was essential that the intergovernmental bodies concerned followed-up on this mandate and took the steps necessary to ensure a more streamlined format, to facilitate the possibility of automating the translation into the six official languages, as much as possible, in order to continue to provide the Journal in a cost-neutral manner. Last but not least, the <a href="Under-Secretary-General">Under-Secretary-General</a> encouraged delegations to actively use the survey feature available from the new digital Journal which would help the Secretariat to further improve the Journal in light of Member States' requirements.
- 5. Regarding e-services, the General Assembly had encouraged Member States "to make, to the extent possible, full use of the e-services provided by the Secretariat" and requested the Secretariat "to further improve, harmonize and, where appropriate, unify such services." Over the past two years, DGACM had prioritized the further development, upgrading and fine-tuning of e-applications. The Department had unified existing ones through the e-deleGATE portal thereby facilitating easy access through a single platform that is available for use by the General Assembly and its six Main Committees. The e-deleGATE portal, inter alia, hosted e-Sponsorship, e-Speakers, e-Correspondence, e-Places, e-Decisions, e-Membership and Candiweb as well as e-Accreditation. All the official correspondence of the United Nations addressed to the Member States was available through the e-deleGATE portal. The services available through e-deleGATE were additional to documentation-related applications such as the Official Documents System (ODS), e-Subscription, Papersmart and undocs.org. As of now, around 2,700 delegates had subscribed to have access to e-deleGATE.
- 6. In the **interactive segment**, delegations expressed appreciation for the update provided by the Secretariat and noted the tangible improvements that had been made since the adoption of resolution 71/323 concerning specific issues previously identified in the relationship between Permanent Missions and the Secretariat, in particular the creation of a one-stop-shop portal. At the same time, other issues were highlighted which continued to be pertinent in terms of concerns, or needed to be addressed.

- As to the Journal, one group of States expressed deep concern at what it perceived as unilateral measures by the Secretariat regarding its contents and requested the Secretariat to put an end to such initiatives which it argued undermined the role and authority of the General Assembly. The group pointed out that, since January 2017, exhibitions organized by Member States were no longer published and that the Secretariat did not accept any announcements of non-official events held by Member States after 6 p.m. Without prejudice to the Secretariat's ownership of internal policy-making, any changes should not affect Member States' rights to use the UN headquarters capacities in an appropriate manner. As a solution, this group suggested compulsory consultations with Member States on such issues as part of the comprehensive dialogue between Member States and the Secretariat within the framework of the AHWG. Yet, mindful of the importance of the issues related to the Journal, the group did not wish to discuss the Journal at this meeting but instead have a separate meeting dedicated to it.
- 8. On the other hand, <u>some speakers</u> welcomed the improvements in the Journal that had been implemented since the beginning of 2018, in particular as regarded extension of content provided in all six languages. Delegations looked forward to improved search functions and welcomed the opportunity of a survey. Questions were raised concerning the Journal's format and discrepancies in that regard between the digital and the print versions. The question of real-time updates of cancellations and postponement of meetings was raised and proposals were made to either use the Journal Twitter account or to broadcast the relevant information from the screens currently used in the Conference Building. An observation was made that the digital Journal required lengthy time for it to open on electronic devices.
- 9. The <u>Under-Secretary-General/DGACM</u> assured the Working Group that her department was committed to continuously improving the Journal in order to make it more user-friendly and welcomed all feedback received from the membership. While some requests that were not directly related to an intergovernmental process could not be accommodated in the past, the digital Journal now allowed Member States to publish other announcements, including exhibitions, under a new section entitled "Side Events". This section was reserved for announcements by Permanent and Observer Missions. The Department was also intent on standardizing content to facilitate the extension of information that was provided in the six official languages. Concerning real-time updates of cancellation and postponement of meetings, this presented a challenge in so far as it involved translation into all official languages.
- 10. A group of States sought timely updating of UN protocol lists and underlined the need to ensure lists posted on the UN website and on e-deleGATE are identical. It called upon the Secretariat to assist Permanent Missions in building their capacities to adapt to e-services; and sought an update as to the availability of official UN correspondence online. Furthermore, it was stressed that decisions regarding the use of UN facilities including its conference rooms should be the prerogative of Member States rather than that of the Secretariat. One delegation noted obstacles and prohibitions all around, pointing, for instance, to the perceived double standards in the granting of permission of side events at UNHQ. That delegation concluded that there had been no improvements since the establishment of the comprehensive dialogue two years ago. Another delegation pointed

out the need for enhanced accessibility to the General Assembly Hall and conference rooms by persons with disabilities.

- 11. The <u>Under-Secretary-General/DGACM</u> informed the Working Group that the use of United Nations premises for meetings, conferences, special events and exhibits was governed by ST/AI/416, as well as the note verbal of February 2017 from DGACM to Member States. In recent years, there had been an exponential increase in nonintergovernmental meetings, especially events that involved performances. DGACM had been working closely with the parties concerned to meet the needs of the Member States while reducing wear and tear to the meeting rooms and avoiding disruption to the smooth proceeding of the inter-governmental processes in the meeting rooms. Accordingly, a revised note verbal on the use of UN premises that was designed to better meet the needs of Member States would soon be issued. Regarding protocol, the Blue Book was currently being published monthly by the Protocol and Liaison Service. DGACM was in the process of developing the required software to enable it to publish "real time" versions of the e-Blue Book. As a reminder, updates to the Blue Book - and all other Protocol data, including lists of Heads of State, Heads of Government, and Foreign Ministers - could only be generated upon submission of timely and complete information by the Permanent Missions. Concerning discrepancy of information, DGACM routinely reviewed all websites under its management. Consequently, any outdated information was immediately removed.
- 12. A group of States encouraged the Secretariat to inform the Member States as to the modalities applicable in the elections taking place in the General Assembly, in particular during the period between the opening of ballot boxes to the announcement of the result, with a view to ensuring that all norms are followed to protect the integrity of secret ballots, including through the prohibition of the use of mobile phones. One delegation sought information as to the criteria applicable in the preparation of the list of speakers for the general debate.
- 13. The <u>Under-Secretary-General/DGACM</u> informed the Working Group that the tellers selected for elections in the General Assembly were thoroughly briefed by the General Assembly Affairs Branch regarding the applicable modalities, including that they should not use mobile devices until the resumption of the plenary meeting at which the balloting results were announced. However, unless the Secretariat were to confiscate all electronic devices from the delegates concerned, there could be no 100% guarantee that no information was divulged among Member States. As regarded the list of speakers for the general debate, this was customarily prepared on the basis of the principles "first-come, first served" and "precedence of protocol", bearing in mind applicable provisions and established practice. Any special requests were accommodated by placing representatives as the last speaker in the morning or the afternoon meeting, which either would be during lunch time or late in the evening. The earlier such a request is communicated to the Secretariat, the more likely it was that it could be accommodated.
- 14. A group of States expressed its deep concerns regarding what it described as "absurdly excessive behavior" of some UN security personnel in exercising their daily duty, either in the margins of the general debate or during other high-level meetings at UN Headquarters. That group called upon the Secretariat to put an end to such attitude and

stressed the need to act in strict accordance with relevant resolutions concerning safety and security. The group requested DSS to provide clarifications regarding the legal basis under which foreign security units are authorized to operate on UN premises. One delegation noted the apparent discrepancy between foreign security personnel, who seem to be permitted to carry arms in meetings rooms, and UN security personnel, who were not. Another delegation queried the need for the strict security protocol for access of diplomatic vehicles.

- 15. The <u>Under-Secretary-General/DSS</u> emphasized the need to balance security requirements with optimal access and flow of traffic within the United Nations Headquarters. Security staff should always be as polite as possible while being as firm as necessary. If there were any instances of inappropriate behaviour, or other complaints by delegations, these should be immediately reported to the USG of DSS who assured that all complaints would be looked into and taken seriously. As regards foreign security personnel, these would require authorization by DSS and needed to operate under strict guidelines and in close collaboration with DSS. The authorization of foreign security personnel was based on elevated risk assessments regarding the dignitary concerned. As to the searching of vehicles, DSS could not rely on 24/7 supervision of incoming cars which made the current protocol, which entailed a two-step process, necessary.
- 16. One group of States expressed deep concern regarding the discrepancy in the press releases which, it suggested, for the main part did not reflect the substance of Member States' statements. Worse, such discrepancy was noted when the same issue was reported differently in different official languages. The group called upon the Secretariat to take the appropriate measures in order to address this issue. One delegation reiterated this concern, suggesting that press releases read more like a commentary on the intervention, than a summary of the intervention itself, and also pointed to the need for conformity in the interpretation of statements. The need for archiving of webcasts in all six official languages was also noted. A question was raised as to the time required for translating and making available in six languages of communications submitted by Member States for issuance as official documents. One delegation queried as to the possibility of providing password-protected access to closed meetings via webcast services. Yet another suggested that this could lead to the dissemination of confidential information.
- 17. The <u>Director of DPI</u>, noting the proposal for password-protected webcast of closed meetings, acknowledged the risk that content so webcast could always reach unintended users, and assured that DPI would look into options. For budgetary reasons, DPI was no longer in a position to archive webcast in all official languages, but only in English and the language of original delivery. Concerning press releases, these were not verbatim records but rather summaries of key messages that were prepared under great time pressure. Accuracy of content was of ultimate importance to DPI. If there were any inaccurate references, these should be brought to its attention for correction. The discrepancy between the English and the French versions of press releases was as result of their simultaneous preparation; one was not the translation of the other.

- 18. As regards interpretation, the <u>Under-Secretary-General/DGACM</u> drew the attention of the membership to a trend of increasingly accelerated delivery of statements, which was partly due to the time limits imposed by the Assembly itself, e.g. during one-day high-level meetings. This, however, made it nearly impossible to provide a perfect interpretation of interventions. While 100-120 words per minute was the maximum of words that humanely could be interpreted, many deliveries exceeded that threshold. Concerning documentation, the Under-Secretary-General noted that parliamentary documentation that was mandated by intergovernmental bodies had priority in terms of processing, referring in particular to Fifth Committee documentation for the second resumed part of the session, but assured the Working Group that documents submitted by individual Members would be translated and issued as soon as possible.
- 19. Several speakers expressed their dissatisfaction with the current state of catering and related services, noting especially the extraordinarily high costs charged. One delegation enquired as to the supervision of cafeteria staff to ensure proper quality of service.
- 20. In response, the <u>Director of the Facilities and Commercial Services Division in DM</u> acknowledged the ongoing challenge of attracting vendors who might be interested in operating the catering services at UN Headquarters, as previously reported to the Working Group during last session's interactive dialogue. In this regard, the situation had remained unchanged. The Director briefed the Working Group on the history of procuring service providers, citing a lack of interest as epitomized by the low number of bidders. Additional factors affecting the cost charged for catering services included unionized labour. Yet, it was perfectly understandable that Member States wished to have proper access to use the Delegates Dining Room for their official functions.
- 21. One group of States requested to receive clarifications from the Secretariat regarding the issuance of a compendium of best practices of past Presidents; the review of the OPGA's budget allocation in the context of the current programme budget; and on the action undertaken in relation to the archives of the OPGA.
- 22. Concerning the budget allocation for the OPGA, the <u>Under-Secretary-General/DGACM</u> recalled that a thematic debate dedicated to the "Strengthening of the accountability, transparency and institutional memory of the OPGA" would take place on 27 April at which DGACM would brief the Working Group, as requested by resolution 71/323. In the meantime, the Under-Secretary-General informed the Working Group that DGACM, for the second time, had organized an induction programme for the President-elect of the 72<sup>nd</sup> session and his team prior to the opening of the session and looked forward to continuing this practice. DGACM also had assisted the outgoing presidency of the 71<sup>st</sup> session in the preparation of a handover report to the presidency of the 72<sup>nd</sup> session, which was circulated to all Member States in a letter from the President dated 6 October 2017. This was in addition to a wide range of support services provided to the incoming Presidents.

- 23. As to the request for clarification concerning paragraph 32 of resolution 67/297, by which the Assembly requested the Secretariat, in coordination with the OPGA, to "explore the possibility of issuing a compendium of best practices of past Presidents", the Under-Secretary-General recalled that, in response, the Secretariat had sought further clarification from the Working Group on the type, nature and objective of the requested compendium, also bearing in mind the political aspects of the Secretariat issuing best practices of past Presidents when the latter were also requested by the Assembly to brief successors directly on lessons learned and best practices. Concerning archiving, the General Assembly, in resolution 71/323, had supported the efforts made thus far in archiving and record-keeping by the OPGA, and had stressed the need to continue to consider methods to effectively preserve the Office's institutional memory. As far as the Secretariat was concerned, existing record-keeping and archiving facilities could be made available subject to steps undertaken by OPGA.
- 24. Responding to a question concerning the budget allocation of the OPGA, the <u>Under-Secretary-General/DGACM</u> recalled that the Secretary-General had included proposals in the proposed programme budget 2018-2019, which reflected an increase of \$386,500. However, the General Assembly, when it adopted the programme budget 2018-2019, decided against these additional resources.
- 25. The question of selection of executive heads and senior appointment was raised by one group of States who was of the view that the briefings by the Office of Human Resources Management on Gender Balance and Regional Origin should be maintained as a good practice in order to follow up the improvements made in the composition of the Secretariat. While the gender parity which the Secretary General has managed to achieve at the highest positions in the UN Secretariat was welcome, the group felt that the women chosen from the developing countries should also be from the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and Small Island Developing States. To ensure this, it suggested developing a criterion to bring on board women candidates from these states.
- 26. The <u>Co-Chairs</u> informed the Working Group that the cluster "Selection and appointment of the Secretary-General and other executive heads" will be discussed at the next thematic meeting which was scheduled for 16 April, as announced in the programme of work circulated by the Co-Chairs on 19 January 2018.
- 27. In concluding remarks, the <u>Co-Chairs</u> thanked all delegations for their participation and the Secretariat for its thorough responses which underlined that the dialogue, which was mutually beneficial, had now become firmly embedded in the AHWG's work. It had become evident that there were signs of progress and the resolution 71/323 had borne fruit. At the same time, there continued to be legitimate concerns, which was only natural as the attainment of perfection was difficult. The Co-Chairs noted as an area of particular interest to the wider membership the use of the Delegates Dining Room, which continued to be a serious issue. As regards the Journal, there had been an expression of interest for further discussion, which could take place as part of the negotiation process on the Working Group's draft resolution.

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# Gender Parity and Geographic Representation

Presentation to Ad-Hoc Working Group on GA Revitalization

Office of Human Resources Management 16 April 2018

#### **Executive Heads**

	Female	Female	Male	Male	Total	Total
Region		%		%		%
African Group	1	3.1	4	12.5	5	15.6
Asia-Pacific Group	2	6.3	4	12.5	6	18.8
Eastern European Group  Latin American and Caribbean Group	<b>1</b>	3.1	2	6.3	3	9.4
(GRULAC) Western European and Others Group	 	3.1	2	6.3	3	9.4
(WEOG)	4	12.5	11	34.4	15	46.9
Total	9	28.1	23	71.9	32	100.0

Source: CEB, 10 April 2018.

Region: http://www.un.org/depts/DGACM/RegionalGroups.shtml

### Senior Management Group

	Female	Female	Male	Male	Total	Total
Region		%		%		%
African Group	6	13.3	3	6.7	9	20.0
Asia-Pacific Group	6	13.3	4	8.9	10	22.2
Eastern European Group	1	2.2	2	4.4	3	6.7
Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC)	6	13.3	2	4.4	8	17.8
Western European and Others						
Group (WEOG)	6	13.3	9	20.0	15	33.3
Grand Total	25	55.6	20	44.4	45	100.0

Source: From https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/senior-management-group as at 10 Apr 2018.

Region: http://www.un.org/depts/DGACM/RegionalGroups.shtml

#### **Secretariat - All Staff**

	Female	Female	Male	Male	Total	Total
Region		%		%		%
African Group	4007	10.5	11281	29.6	15288	40.1
Asia-Pacific Group	2563	6.7	5256	13.8	7819	20.5
Eastern European Group	947	2.5	1369	3.6	2316	6.1
Latin American and Caribbean						
Group (GRULAC)	1297	3.4	1256	3.3	2553	6.7
Western European and Others						
Group (WEOG)	4831	12.7	5133	13.5	9964	26.1
Other	30	0.1	135	0.4	165	0.4
Grand Total	13675	35.9	24430	64.1	38105	100.0

Note: Other includes staff from State of Palestine and Stateless.

Source: United Nations Secretariat demographic data as at 31 December 2017 for the table has been gathered from Umoja with cut-off date of 10 January 2018, or were provided directly by United Nations entities.

Region: http://www.un.org/depts/DGACM/RegionalGroups.shtml

#### **Secretariat - LLDC**

	Female	Female	Male	Male	Total	Total		
Region		%		%		%		
Landlocked Developing Countries								
African Group	1329	3.5	3687	9.7	5016	13.2		
Asia-Pacific Group	218	0.6	1393	3.7	1611	4.2		
Eastern European Group	47	0.1	63	0.2	110	0.3		
Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC)	27	0.1	39	0.1	66	0.2		
Western European and Others Group (WEOG)	0	0.0	0	0.0	o	0.0		
Other	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0		
Sub Total	1621	4.3	5182	13.6	6803	17.9		
Non Landlocked Developing Countries								
All regional groups	12054	31.6	19248	50.5	31302	82.1		
Total	13675	35.9	24430	64.1	38105	100.0		

Note: Other includes staff from State of Palestine and Stateless.

Source: United Nations Secretariat demographic data as at 31 December 2017 for the table has been gathered from Umoja with cut-off date of 10 January 2018, or were provided directly by United Nations entities.

Landlocked Developing Countries from <a href="http://unohrlls.org/about-lldcs/country-profiles/">http://unohrlls.org/about-lldcs/country-profiles/</a>

Region: http://www.un.org/depts/DGACM/RegionalGroups.shtml; Other includes staff from State of Palestine or Stateless

#### **Secretariat - SIDS**

	Female	Female	Male	Male	Total	Total	
Region		%		%		%	
Small Island Developing States							
African Group	41	0.1	77	0.2	118	0.3	
Asia-Pacific Group	68	0.2	135	0.4	203	0.5	
Eastern European Group	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
Latin American and Caribbean Group							
(GRULAC)	364	1.0	377	1.0	741	1.9	
Western European and Others Group (WEOG)	o	0.0	0	0.0	o	0.0	
Other	o	0.0	0	0.0	o	0.0	
Sub Total	473	1.2	589	1.5	1062	2.8	
Non Small Island Developing States							
All regional groups	13202	34.6	23841	62.6	37043	97.2	
Total	13675	35.9	24430	64.1	38105	100.0	

Note: Other includes staff from State of Palestine and Stateless.

Source: United Nations Secretariat demographic data as at 31 December 2017 for the table has been gathered from Umoja with cut-off date of 10 January 2018, or were provided directly by United Nations entities.

Small Island Developing States from <a href="http://unohrlls.org/about-sids/country-profiles/">http://unohrlls.org/about-sids/country-profiles/</a> (for Member States)

Region: http://www.un.org/depts/DGACM/RegionalGroups.shtml; Other includes staff from State of Palestine or Stateless



### Thank You

Gracias Thank You Merci Спасибо أشكر 谢谢