

TO: Mr. Christopher Bagot, Chief  
A: Geneva Audit Service  
Internal Audit Division, OIOS

DATE: 30 November 2011

FROM: Vladimir Gratchev, Director  
DE: Division of Conference Management



SUBJECT: Comments on OIOS Assignment No. AE2010/312/01 - Audit of conference  
OBJET: services funding and costing arrangements at UNOG

1. As requested in your memo of October 21, 2011, please find attached DCM's comments on the recommendations in the draft audit report.
2. Please note the following comments on the substance of the report.

Paragraph 7 does not reflect that DCM is under the authority and accountability of the USG, DGACM for the management of all resources in the context of integrated global management (IGM) of conference services. The issues raised should be addressed to the appropriate level, which, as per IGM, is DGACM.

Paragraph 9 does not accurately reflect DCM's biennial budget preparation process. Paragraph 9b should be corrected to state that the baseline is adjusted to reflect increases or decreases deriving from mandate changes, and not, as shown, on a percentage basis. Paragraph 9 c, which states the DCM's budget is submitted through the Financial Resources Management Service (FRMS) of UNOG to DGACM, is incorrect. DCM's budget is submitted to DGACM through the UN Budget Information System (UNBIS). FRMS is not involved at all in the budget submission. DCM also notes that paragraph 9 should reflect the role of PPBD in adjusting the submissions and finalizing the budget fascicle. Paragraph 9f should also indicate that DCM, along with the other conference servicing duty stations, participates in one meeting with the ACABQ, usually via videoconferencing and that DCM provides input to DGACM to answer questions from the ACABQ and the Fifth Committee.

DCM proposes paragraph 10 be clarified to more accurately reflect DCM's approach to requesting additional resources, noting that it focused on new and expanded mandates, not those that were static.

For paragraph 11, the last sentence about FRMS should be removed, as FRMS is not involved in DCM's budget preparation.

For paragraph 17, DCM notes that there is guidance on preparing PBIs, but it is not formal.

For paragraph 19, DCM notes that the \$17.7 million referred to is not the final appropriation, but the increase to the appropriation for 2010-2011. It also notes that its original estimation of additional requirements was based on new and revised mandates.

For paragraph 20, DCM notes that it had some tools, albeit very limited, to present an overview of resource requirements and the gap in funding.

For paragraph 21, DCM notes that its Monitoring, Evaluations, Risk Management, and Statistical Verification Section (MERS) prepares the workload indicators and statistics, which was previously under the Executive Office, but is now under the Office of Information Management and Evaluation (OIME). DCM uses the workload standards set by the General Assembly and the methodology determined by DGACM in its workload/capacity planning.

In response to paragraph 26, DCM notes that it has been reluctant to establish capping outside of the framework of integrated global management.

In response to paragraph 36, DCM notes that it is working on reviewing its backlog data and has verified it through 2006. DCM notes that the backlog of International Law Commission (ILC) Yearbooks is now 95 volumes, going back to 2002, totaling 27 million words. For the translation backlog, there are 8.8 million words remaining for the period 2006 - mid-2011.

**ANNEX I**  
**RECOMMENDATIONS**  
**Audit of conference services funding and costing arrangements at UNOG**

| Para. no. | Recommendation   | Critical/important | Accepted ? (Yes/No) | Responsible individual                                    | Implementation date | Client comments  |
|-----------|--|--------------------|---------------------|---|---------------------|--|
| 13        | UNOG Division of Conference Management should conduct a structured assessment of the conference servicing needs of its clients to justify the requested resources in terms of the requirements of output delivery. | Critical           | Yes                 | Chief of Central Planning and Support Service (CPCS), DCM |                     | <p><i>DCM is a service provider without a substantive programme, and thus does not determine its workload. DCM has relatively little discretion in how to implement its work programme, given that conference service workload standards and timeframes, as defined by the GA, have remained constant and the target share of contractual translation is set by the Committee on Conferences. Existing costing methodology used for cost estimates involves notional costing and is thus not directly applicable to the biennial project process. OIOS expects DGACM to establish in the context of integrated global management a clear costing methodology for use in this context.</i></p> <p><i>DCM has taken initial steps towards this goal through implementation of a forecasting module for clients to submit their projected requirements for a six-month period. The Division compares the requirements with the existing mandates, the Calendar of Conferences, and expected capacity. It has proved difficult for clients to forecast their requirements on a six-month basis, so expanding this exercise to cover the full biennium may prove problematic. It should be noted that some mandates are not specific, most notably the HRC mandate to meet no less than ten weeks per year, which makes forecasting the workload problematic for clients. DGACM's initiative in the Secretary-General's report on the Pattern of Conferences, A/66/118, to resolve this problem and require all new legislative mandates to specify relevant information for meetings and documentation was not supported in the Committee on Conferences; ACABQ held the proposal should go to the General Assembly.</i></p> <p><i>DCM notes that client workload derives from mandates and thus it could not consider client requests for</i></p> |

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|    |  |           |     |  | <p>increases beyond the mandates. For situations where mandate is unclear, DCM and its clients are in difficult position. Certain documents have no limits, such as Member State States party reports, which are rarely submitted as per the Treaty Body reporting schedule. The combined treaty body system accounts for 29% of documentation processed in DCM, so this unpredictability has a large impact on DCM operations. The OIOS may wish to recommend something more concrete such as making workload projections in cost estimates binding or that DCM implement capping such as is the case in UNOY.</p>   |
| 22 | <p>UNOG Division of Conference Management, in consultation with the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, should systematically review the gap between budgetary allocations and the estimated resource requirements in order to assess the implications of funding shortfalls.</p> | Critical  | Yes | <p>Chief of Central Planning and Support Service (CPCS), DCM with input from the Languages Service (LS), Executive Office (EO), and the Office of Information Management and Evaluation (OIME)</p> | <p>DCM, as part of DGACM's workload/capacity planning exercise, implemented this biennium, has identified resource shortfalls. These shortfalls have resulted in increasing backlog of documentation and poor compliance with issuance schedules, as well as extension of last biennium's discontinuation of summary records for the Human Rights Council. DCM negotiated with clients regularly to re-prioritize documents on a short-term basis. DCM welcomes an integrated global approach to management of shortfalls, recognizing that client expect a consistent level of service across the four conference servicing duty stations.</p> <p>DCM also notes DGACM has the lead on the two remaining projects, which are a documentation processing system and a data warehouse. The Framework for Performance Indicators has been finalized and is being codified in the new IT systems for documentation processing and data extraction, which DGACM is developing. Once these systems come on line, standardized data and statistics will be available.</p> |
| 34 | <p>UNOG Division of Conference Management, in consultation with the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, should regularly report resource shortfalls to Member States to increase their awareness of the implications of the</p>   | Important | No  |  | <p>In principle, DCM welcomes this recommendation and already regularly addresses intergovernmental bodies, most notably the HRC, regional groups, and individual Member States and provides briefings on its resource shortfalls and constraints. DCM has also participated in videoconferences with the ACABQ and the Committee on Conferences to explain its situation. DCM participates in</p>  |

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| 37 | funding deficiencies on conference service delivery. | UNOG Division of Conference Management, in consultation with the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, should obtain formal approval of Member States for the cost avoidance mechanisms utilized in responding to resource shortfalls. | Important | No |  | <p><i>the Task Force of the President of the Human Rights Council. DCM participates in workshops and briefings. DCM regularly provides input to DGACM for use in discussions with the New York-based bodies that take budgetary decisions.</i></p> <p><i>DCM considers that in light of global integration of conference services, which assigns responsibility and authority for the budget of Section 2 to DGACM, that it is not the right level to accept this recommendation.</i></p> <p><i>In principle, DCM welcomes this recommendation, especially in the context of the discontinuation of summary records for the HRC and its Advisory Committee. DCM has reported this situation to the Council directly. As part of the Secretary-General's request to identify 3% cuts, DCM provided a number of suggestions. Some of these were proposed in the latest budget fascicle, including alternates to summary records, discontinuing compilations and yearbooks, formalizing limits on treaty body documentation as proposed by the chairs of the human rights treaty bodies, and eliminating superseded documents in the processing backlog. These proposals were further elaborated in the Secretary-General's report on the Pattern of Conferences, A/66/118, as well as changing the document processing time frame, reducing the print run for documents, and formalization of the proximity rule to reduce travel costs. The Committee on Conferences did not support the majority of these cost avoidance mechanisms. The ACABQ supported the General Assembly's consideration of these mechanisms.</i></p> <p><i>DCM considers that in light of global integration of conference services, which assigns responsibility and authority for the budget of Section 2 to DGACM, that it is not the right level to accept this recommendation.</i></p> |
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**ANNEX II**  
**OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT**  
**Audit of conference services funding and costing arrangements at UNOG**

| Para. no. | Recommendation  | Client comments  |
|-----------|---|--|
| 18        | UNOG Division of Conference Management (DCM) could consider developing standard operating procedures for the preparation and review of programme budget implications related to servicing Human Rights Council and its machinery, including the clarification of the respective roles and responsibilities of the different players involved. | <i>DCM notes that preparation of oral statements for recent sessions of the HRC has gone much more smoothly, reflecting the proactive approach of OHCHR's administration, which has the lead on this matter. DCM concurs that formal SOPs would be a basis for further improvements in the process and notes that these SOPs should apply to all its clients, not only OHCHR. DCM also notes that costing methodology in use in UNOG/FRMS was established between OPPBA and DGACM, so it is not possible for DCM to change it unilaterally.</i>  |
| 27        | UNOG Division of Conference Management (DCM) could consider creating a working group comprising DCM and its clients to facilitate establishing the link between the workload requirements of each client and the proportion of its resources allocated to any particular client.  | <i>DCM notes that it consults with clients regularly to establish the workload forecast, prioritize documentation, and discuss process improvements. In October, DCM notified its clients of the coming documentation challenges and solicited client input to ensure that highest priority documentation is processed as effectively as possible. DCM also is an active participant in the Task Force under the leadership of the President of the HRC.<br/>Establishing a multi-lateral working group could help clients better understand the demands the Division faces and might develop into a forum to exchange best practices in documentation management.</i> |