Production and distribution of documentation for the governing bodies

1. At its seventh meeting, in January 2003, the Audit Committee requested that a study be undertaken of the production and distribution of documentation for the governing bodies, with a view to identifying how certain operational issues might be resolved. In particular, several documents were dispatched after the deadline of four weeks before the opening of the 111th session of the Executive Board, and one of the main documents for the Audit Committee became available at the opening of the seventh meeting.

2. Since that meeting, the Board, through resolution EB112.R1, amended its Rules of Procedure. It revised the timing for dispatch of documentation as follows:

   “Rule 5:

   Notices convening the Board shall be sent by the Director-General, eight weeks before the commencement of a regular session, to the members of the Board, to Member States and Associate Members and to the organizations referred to in Rule 4 invited to be represented at the session.

   Documents for the session shall be dispatched by the Director-General not less than six weeks before the commencement of a regular session of the Board. They shall, at the same time, be made available in electronic form in the working languages of the Board on the Internet site of the Organization.

   ...”

3. To process documentation the Secretariat draws up a detailed plan once the draft provisional agenda has been prepared. It is based on dispatch of all documents within the timeframe established by the governing body and covers all stages of processing, from drafting to dispatch. All staff concerned operate on the basis of this plan.

4. Some documents might not comply with the timeframe of the document plan because of their nature or content. These include:

---

1 See document EBAC7/5.
• reports covering a calendar year(s) which are finalized only after this period has ended, for example, the annual report on human resources, or the status of collection of assessed contributions;

• documents containing the report of a meeting that has occurred late in the period before the governing body meeting, such as the report on recommendations of the International Civil Service Commission that can be completed only after the United Nations General Assembly ends in December;

• documents related to the process of the governing body, such as speeches, list of participants, reports of committees of the Board, nominations, etc., which are issued during the session;

• reports on topical or evolving matters that may be issued late in order to include last minute information. The Secretariat has to weigh the obligation to comply with deadlines against the provision of a current and more useful document. An additional document containing updated information is often issued.

5. Aside from the above exceptions, in the past year most governing body documents were dispatched in compliance with the Board’s requirement. For example, of the 37 documents for the 111th session of the Board that had to meet the dispatch deadline, four were late.

6. Overall, there has been an improvement in the timeliness of documentation between the 2002 and the 2003 cycle, although some documents still did not meet planned deadlines. The Ad hoc open-ended intergovernmental working group to review the working methods of the Executive Board reiterated that compliance with deadlines or lack of it was a major issue. Several measures have therefore been put in place in 2003 that should contribute to better performance, such as provision of training for the originators of documents and stronger follow-up of document processing, at a more senior level when required.

7. In pursuance of revised Rule 5 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board, processing deadlines will need to be enforced even more rigorously in order to assure dispatch of documents not later than six weeks before the opening of the session. It should be noted that according to the revision to the Rules of Procedure, new agenda items can be proposed up to 10 weeks before the session, the provisional agenda must be produced eight weeks before in order to accompany the letter of convocation, and the last dispatch of documents is six weeks before the session. In other words, there is a period of only two weeks between the deadline for dispatch of the finalized agenda and that for dispatch of documentation.

8. The Audit Committee may wish to consider the above observations.