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EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
CABINET DU SECRETAIRE GENERAL

REFERENCE:

22 October 2012

Dear Mr Smith,

I acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 4 October 2012 addressed to the Secretary-General, in which you raised several issues in the Publishing Section of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM).

In his capacity as Chief Administrative Officer of the Organization, the Secretary-General is responsible for managing the Secretariat to deliver the mandates set by Member States in the most effective and efficient manner. Doing so requires that we continually reassess and improve the way we work. While this is always a requirement, it is particularly the case at this time, given the financial difficulties faced by many Member States.

In this regard, with respect to the printing of documents and publications, the Secretary-General decided on 28 April 2011 to substantially to reduce the number of publications, the length of reports, and the distribution of hard copies. Alongside these changes to the way we do business, the rapid development of information technologies has also enabled new business models in many sectors, including publishing. This trend indicates a dramatic drop in demand for printed copies. Given these changes, the Secretariat is now in a position to manage its publishing services to deliver on all its mandates, while respecting multilingualism, in a more resource-efficient and client-responsive way.

Mr. Alex O'Keith Smith Sr.
Staff Representative
Department for General Assembly and
Conference Management
United Nations
New York

I would also like to assure you that the shift to digital technologies and reduction of print production in the Headquarters Publishing Section is not an unsanctioned policy initiative but, rather, an implementation by DGACM managers of the Secretary-General's roadmap as he has described to the Member States.

In this regard, the Secretary-General's budget proposal for the biennium 2014-2015 will build on the budget approved by Member States for the current biennium. While proposals are still being finalized and are subject to approval by the General Assembly, it is likely that the Publishing Section will continue to reflect the changing business practices highlighted above and that further reductions in staffing levels will be proposed. As such, using the available time until the end of 2013 to manage smoothly this likely drawdown process is imperative in order to minimise the impact on staff in the Section. Reluctance to utilize this time to facilitate the reassignment of staff who wish to do so may increase the difficulties of a smooth transition for affected staff at a later point and is not, in my view, in their best interest.

I would therefore encourage you, in the interest of the staff of the Section, to engage constructively in the consultation being undertaken by the management of the Department. Doing so is the best way for us to jointly address the fundamental changes taking place in areas of our work such as the publishing sector in a manner which best takes into account the needs of affected staff.

In conclusion, with reference to your statement that you will bring certain internal issues to the attention of Member States, I would draw your attention to staff regulation 1.2 (i) and staff rule 1.2 (i), which address relevant obligations which apply to all staff members.



Susana Malcorra
Chef de Cabinet