

Department for General Assembly and Conference Management

Publishing Section Media Points

At the United Nations Spokesperson's noon briefing to the press corps on Friday, 7 October 2011, Mr. Matthew Russell Lee of *Inner City Press* stated:

"...I just [inaudible] that as part of the... this, I guess, UN budget-cutting, that there are... it's a 3... you know, 3 per cent cut, some have estimated that to be about 150 posts, but I've heard that...that, just yesterday, people working in UN publishing were told that 41 of those cuts will come from their department — 37 posts and 4 trades and crafts — and they... they... you know, it seems like that's 30 per cent of the... the overall whole UN system cuts is coming from one place. I wanted you to... it... it... to confirm if that's true, and wonder...they wonder, and I also in turn wonder, whether — obviously things are more online now — but whether this idea of totally phasing out publication and laying those people off is something that's been checked with Member States in terms of them using things like the Journal, and...and pre... you know, the various things that are printed by the UN, including reports. Is it true that 30 per cent of the cuts are in one division and why is that the case?"

In response, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management notes:

- The United Nations Publishing Section at Headquarters plays a vital role in the daily production of parliamentary documents and publications in all six languages. The print shop operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and ensures that all publishing requirements are met in a cost-effective and timely manner.
- While there may always be a need for paper copies, users of United Nations documents are increasingly insisting on receiving their daily documents in electronic format. Consequently, the Publishing Section now places greater emphasis on digital technology and printing and electronic distribution, while also making better and more efficient use of available in-house resources.
- The output numbers of the Publishing Section thus tell an encouraging story of change towards supporting the Secretary-General's priority to modernize the Organization for increased efficiency and effectiveness by leveraging technology.
- In the first three quarters of 2009, the Publishing Section printed 99.5 million sheets of paper. This number dropped drastically to 67.5 million sheets of paper in 2010 for the same timeframe and has gone down even further to 34 million sheets of paper in 2011. The trend is continuing.
- Reflecting on savings for the Organization and the environment (January to September 2011, compared to January to September 2009), 65.5 million sheets of paper have not been used (131,000 reams). When stacked, 131,000 reams of paper would rise to a height of 6,655 metres—43 times taller than one United Nations Secretariat building. Furthermore, the reduction in the use of paper has resulted in

Department for General Assembly and Conference Management

7,860 trees from being cut down (covering a land mass equivalent to 24 soccer fields), and in conserving 25 million gallons of water (enough to fill 38 Olympic size swimming pools).

- The printing operations in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi differ considerably: the conference management services at Geneva and Vienna lease printing capacity, and the Department in New York is also moving in that direction, while much of the printing at Nairobi is done on an extra-budgetary charge-back basis that uses a different costing and accounting approach.
- All duty stations anticipate a significant reduction in demand for printed parliamentary documents due to changes in the working methods of permanent missions and the ease with which electronic versions of documents can be accessed. At Headquarters, the traditional offset printing of documents will gradually be replaced by digital printing; this shift, which began at Headquarters in mid-2010, has already taken place at the other duty stations.
- The demand for printed copies of publications is also expected to decline significantly. At Headquarters, there is a plan to reduce the volume of publications printed in-house and to switch to commercial printers for the remaining print requirements. Given the staff and machinery involved, this drawdown process is being managed carefully and is expected to be concluded in the biennium 2012-2013.
- With the Department's investment in digital technology and implementation of cost-avoidance measures such as streamlining workflows, enforcement of page limits, the move towards printing on demand and the introduction of electronic distribution systems and electronic media (including multimedia) in the print production system, the Department's proposed programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013 (heeding the Secretary-General's guidance for budget-cuts Secretariat-wide) calls for the abolition of 37 Trades and Crafts posts and 4 General Service posts in the Reproduction Unit, while 64 posts from other units of the Publishing Section will be redeployed internally to other parts of the Department in support of the change from print to the web.
- In this connection, it should be noted that the *Journal*, the Department's "best-seller," is now printed in only 444 copies (down from 5,423 copies in 2009), but has 2,855 e-subscribers, 2,326 followers on Twitter and 1,571 "friends" on Facebook. Furthermore, through the www.undocs.org e-subscription portal, as of Friday, 14 October 2011, 10,204 subscribers receive various official United Nations documents via e-mail or web feeds. The number of e-subscribers increases daily.
- The post reductions in the New York Printing Section are contained in the Secretary-General's proposed programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013. They are expected to be achieved through attrition and other management measures, i.e. without involuntary redundancies.

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