

Pattern of Conferences

Statement by the Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions to the Fifth Committee

(ACABQ report A/67/523, Secretary-General's report A/67/127 and Corr. 1)

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to introduce the Advisory Committee's report on the pattern of conferences, contained in document A/67/523, which covers a number of issues concerning the delivery of conference services.

The report deals with questions relating to meetings management, mainly progress regarding the utilization of conference servicing resources and facilities. The Advisory Committee reiterates its concern at the low average utilization rate of conference serving facilities and recommends that the chair of the Committee on Conferences be urged to intensify his engagement with the concerned bodies, with a view to resolving the underlying issues. Given the competitive situation in Addis Ababa, the Committee expects that a workable marketing strategy would be formulated to address the decreasing utilization of the Conference Centre at the ECA.

With regard to the integrated global management, the Advisory Committee highlights the need to review the relevant Secretary-General's bulletins in order to delineate and codify the dual responsibility of the Under-Secretary-General for DGACM and the Directors-General of the United Nations offices at Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi in relation to conference management. The Committee regrets the lack of progress in the implementation of the required changes to the relevant Secretary-General's bulletins.

With regard to the proximity rule, the Advisory Committee urges the Secretary-General to look beyond travel costs savings in seeking further gains from the implementation of the rule. The Committee also reiterates the General Assembly's position regarding the Flex Time system, as stated in resolution 66/233, and expresses the view that proper analysis is required before further implementation of the system can be considered.

With regard to documentation and publications, the Advisory Committee is concerned about the low overall rate in the timely submission of documents and requests the Secretary-General to address the issue. The Committee also recognizes the capacity constraints that limit workload sharing among duty stations, and it calls for further analysis on workload sharing trends to determine its feasibility. The Committee notes the reported benefits of paper-smart method of conducting meetings, based on the Department's experience with the Rio+20 conference. It requests the Secretary-General to also report on the human and financial resource as well as other implications of such an approach.

Finally, the Advisory Committee's report addresses matters related to translation and interpretation. Regarding translation, editing and text-processing, the Committee notes the lack of consistency in productivity across the four main duty stations. The Advisory Committee also calls for greater efforts to identify and address the root causes of the high vacancy rate for translators and interpreters at the United Nations office in Nairobi.

I thank you.