

**Statement by Inspector Gérard Biraud on**  
**Records and Archives Management in the United Nations**

**UNGA Fifth Committee**

**Agenda Item 134**

**12 October 2015**

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Colleagues,

It is a pleasure for me to introduce to you the findings and conclusions of the JIU report Records and Archives Management in the United Nations, and an honour to do it in the presence of the Secretary General.

Records and archives management is an essential component of good governance, accountability and efficiency, in particular at the United Nations, where words are to remain credible references. And how to decide on anything without having learnt from credible sources the lessons of the experience.

Regrettably, I must confirm orally the diagnosis contained in the report: today the conditions to ensure the proper management of the organizational records are far to be met . The organization is no longer subject to a risk for the future, but, with some exceptional areas, it is presently affected by a pernicious degenerative disease of its institutional memory, and we learnt that many specialized agencies face the same challenge.

Information is the blood of an Organization, but the exponential increase of flows of raw information is going to cast doubts on the quality, the integrity, the validity of any information. To avoid such situation, channeling and sorting it in an orderly manner and appraising what should safely and regularly be saved or sent to trash without loss is precisely the essence of the Records and Archives Management.

The present policy framework of the United Nations Secretariat is obsolete and needs to be complemented, updated and harmoniously geared on the base of common rules. But above all it should translate into practice through a simple initiation of everyone. Key to the success of such policy in every Department, Fund, Programme or Mission are a) a properly delegated authority b) a convinced senior management and c) a competent dedicated staff.

Among the six recommendations presented. Four are directed to the Secretary-General and the executive heads of the entities enjoying a part of his authority. They receive this report for action.. One recommendation is addressed to the Secretary-General as chairman of the CEB, with the hope that he could take a relevant initiative on this matter, across the United Nations system. **The last**

**recommendation is directly addressed to you**, whose major duty to protect the institutional memory converges with your major interest to improve the United Nations..

Recently, both the CEB, through the note A/70/280/Add.1 and the Section of International Organizations from the International Council of Archives. have supported the six recommendations contained in this report. the latter through a recommendation, where it “encourages the UN organizations and other SIO members to take coordinated action” on them. The JIU hopes that those texts will catch all the necessary attention and concrete action to preserve for ever the most precious part of the knowledge and experience of the Organization. .

Mr Chairman, before concluding, I would like to quickly pinpoint two major issues:

First, digital preservation is a challenge to be urgently addressed in view of the overwhelming electronic production and dissemination of the information, including by messaging.

Secondly, the need to let Umoja benefiting from the basic tools of the records and archives management, to be integrated as a strong and mandatory component

Mr. Chairman, distinguished Delegates, it is now for the Member States to pave that way, through the steps recommended in the report. towards a robust mandate given in this regard to the Secretary-General and the executive heads of the other entities of the United Nations. This Committee has the unique opportunity to strengthen for decades the capacity of all United Nations entities to take better informed decisions at all levels and in all areas on the basis of a sound knowledge.

I thank you for your attention.