

Policy Committee of the Secretary-General

Guidance and Tips for Drafting Effective Recommendations

General Guidance

Recommendations for the consideration of the Secretary-General should:

- Be of a strategic nature and importance to the Organization;
- Require the Secretary-General's specific guidance and decision;
- Be ripe for decision-making, following due consultation;
- Be specific and actionable (where possible, identify actors and timeframe);
- Offer options where appropriate.

Recommendations should not:

- Be of a purely tactical or operational nature (unless directly linked to strategic decisions);
- Be a general statement of intent;
- Reaffirm existing policies or actions (unless circumstances have changed).

Some More Specific Tips (that apply in most cases)

- Don't just propose a general objective
 - *Example: The Secretary-General should pursue a peaceful resolution of the conflict in country X.*
 - UN objectives are often obvious and/or already derive from the Charter or specific mandates and therefore don't require a decision or reaffirmation from the Secretary-General.
 - Strategies have to have clear objectives but they are not limited to defining them.
 - Sometimes objectives conflict with each other which should be clearly spelled out and resolved.
- Don't just be tactical or operational
 - *Example: The Special Envoy should meet with party X next week and convey the Secretary-General's concerns.*
 - Tactics relate to day-to-day operations and about how resources are specifically deployed, as opposed to the more strategic 'why and what'.
 - Strategic recommendations are linked to defined objectives (that don't necessarily have to be spelled out in the recommendation itself); without a clear understanding of the objectives, recommended actions tend to be tactical.
 - Very rarely, tactical and operational issues are so directly linked to the strategy or positioning of the UN that they are suitable for Policy Committee discussions.
- Don't just state the obvious or make recommendations that are too generic
 - *Example: The Country Team in X should adopt a human rights based approach.*
 - Apply the 'no test' – check if the negative version makes sense; if not, consider revising the recommendation to make it more specific
- Don't just repeat the TORs of the tasked person or entity
 - *Example: The Special Envoy should engage the parties to seek a political solution to the crisis.*

- Don't recommend action that hasn't worked before or that won't work or make a difference
 - For example, if the UN lacks a political entry point or leverage, explain why and what could be done about it (instead of just recommending that current efforts continue)
 - If a recommendation is repeated even though it hasn't succeeded in the past, clearly explain why the circumstances have changed in a way that significantly increases the chances of success
- Address the difficult or sensitive issues, don't avoid them
 - For example, if a party to the conflict is subject to UN targeted sanctions, propose how political and UNCT representatives should interact with it.
- Refer to the specific individuals or entities being tasked, not 'the UN' in general terms
 - *Example: The UN should advocate with donors X, Y and Z for increased funding for DDR and SSR activities in the lead up to the elections in country A.*
- Don't assume that the Secretary-General should be requested to do something
 - Asking the Secretary-General to make a decision does not mean that the recommendation needs to involve him directly in the implementation
 - Carefully consider which actions the Secretary-General himself should be asked to take, if any, and explore which other senior officials could be tasked
 - If action by the Secretary-General himself is recommended, try to be specific (e.g., letter to X, phone call to Y).
- Try to avoid using the Policy Committee to create or start another process
 - *Example: Department X should lead an inter-departmental assessment mission to country Y and make recommendations to the Secretary-General on the way forward by date Z.*
 - Make sure Policy Committee meetings are scheduled once substantive recommendation can be made, not several months before.
 - Only suggest a new process if you really need the Secretary-General's specific decision to do so.
 - It can be more appropriate to create a new process or mechanism in the case of thematic issues.
- Don't be tentative
 - *Example: The Secretary-General might want to consider appointing a Special Envoy for country X.*
- Think of the recommendation as an ultimate Secretary-General's decision
 - Does it tell the specific UN entities or staff what to do by when, and are they likely to actually implement it?
 - Will it make any difference to anyone?
- Lastly: If there aren't any good and strategic recommendations to make, the item probably shouldn't be on the agenda, or at least not yet.
 - It is clearly preferable to cancel or postpone an agenda item than to submit a paper that does not include good recommendations

Less effective recommendations	More effective recommendations
<p>The Secretary-General should articulate a vision of X.</p>	<p>The Secretary-General's public position on issue X should include the following three points: X, Y and Z. DPI should convey these points as guidance to all senior UN officials.</p>
<p>The Secretary-General should advocate for a cessation of hostilities in country X.</p>	<p>The Secretary-General should contact the key members of the contact group (X, Y and Z) this week to propose a coordinated push for a cessation of hostilities before the end of the month.</p>
<p>The UN Country Team should develop a strategic plan to cover humanitarian, development and political work in country X.</p>	<p>In the lead up to the national elections, Mission X and the UNCT should prioritize employment generation and security sector reform. They should work with the interim government to present an agreed package of projects to the donor conference on date Y.</p>
<p>The Secretary-General should promote UN system action by mainstreaming X in all relevant entities to ensure a coherent and integrated policy response.</p>	<p>Department X should maintain its lead on issue Y, and undertake an inter-departmental review of the effectiveness and capacity of the UN's actions in this area to provide recommendations to the Policy Committee by date Z.</p>
<p>The Secretary-General should designate a senior envoy on issue X.</p>	<p>The Secretary-General should designate a senior envoy by date X who should consult the following key partners with a view to securing support for issue Y.</p>