Chapter II

Providing a platform for the multilateral process

“Every day we are reminded of the need for a strengthened United Nations, as we face a growing array of new challenges, including humanitarian crises, human rights violations, armed conflicts and important health and environmental concerns. Seldom has the United Nations been called upon to do so much for so many. I am determined to breathe new life and inject renewed confidence into a strengthened United Nations firmly anchored in the twenty-first century, and which is effective, efficient, coherent and accountable.”

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

After 65 years of development, the United Nations continues to adapt itself to a changing world. It has evolved during this time – in terms of remit, constituent bodies and working methods – and it must continue to change to meet today’s challenges. Strengthening management and human resources is vital to the effectiveness of the United Nations. UNOG has therefore undertaken initiatives to set up measures to reinforce its ability to service Member States and other users.

■ Responding to the needs of our stakeholders

As a renowned forum for multilateral exchange, UNOG strives to deliver quality services to Member States in accordance with the mandates determined by them. Over the past years, the conference-servicing workload has continued to grow, outpacing available capacity. Consequently, UNOG continuously reviews its work processes and procedures making the best use of its limited resources to ensure client satisfaction.
The global community of stakeholders benefits from the UNOG infrastructure for multilateral collaboration and conference activities. Promoting communication and facilitating negotiations, consistent with the purposes and principles of the United Nations, are the core support activities that contribute to the achievements of the Organization. High-quality documents are provided in a timely manner with full respect for the specificities of the six official languages of the United Nations in accordance with established regulations and rules.

Harmonizing global management of meetings

The Palais des Nations serves as a major platform for multilateral diplomacy. It provides not only a visible location in which delegates undertake their work, but also conference planning, coordination and servicing, and multilingual support for information exchange in varied areas such as human rights, trade and development, worldwide transportation standards and harmonization of vehicle regulations, disarmament, desertification and climate change.

In 2010, UNOG provided conference and documentation support to 8,695 intergovernmental meetings. It continued cost-effective servicing of all the meetings for which it has servicing responsibility despite the rise in demand for documentation and translation services.

Regular consultations with United Nations bodies and organs were conducted in order to forecast and prioritize conference-serving requests based on entitlements, and to achieve optimal use of permanent resources and facilities. As a result of these efforts, utilization of resources remained steady at 95 per cent in 2010.

UNOG has made great efforts to meet the expanding meeting and documentation needs of the Universal Periodic Review and of new human rights bodies established in Geneva, such as the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, for which additional provision of accessibility services, such as sign language interpretation and Braille documentation, has to be planned and integrated into existing workflows.

UNOG also serviced a number of extrabudgetary meetings, such as the Third World Conference of Speakers of Parliaments in July, the Biobridge Regenerative Medicine Conference in October, the UNHCR Dialogue on Protection Challenges in December, various discussions of the Internet Governance Forum, and the meetings of the Executive Committee of the International Organization for Migration.
UNOG acts as the primary interlocutor with governments offering to host United Nations conferences. In that role, it advises countries on all logistical and human resource requirements for hosting such conferences. Throughout 2010, UNOG successfully coordinated and provided services to a number of such conferences outside Geneva (see table below). These activities continue to reinforce links between the United Nations and its Member States in their joint efforts to find solutions to the challenges before the international community.

### Conferences organized outside Geneva

- **UNFCCC thirty-second session of the Subsidiary Bodies, Bonn, Germany**
  - 31 May–11 June 2010

- **UNFCCC Designated National Authority Forum**
  - 28 June–1 July 2010

- **UNFCCC thirteenth session of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties of the Kyoto Protocol and the eleventh session of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention, Bonn, Germany**
  - 2–6 August 2010

- **UNFCCC fourteenth session of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitment for Annex I Parties of the Kyoto Protocol and twelfth session of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention, Tianjin, China**
  - 4–9 October 2010

- **UNFCCC sixteenth Conference of the Parties, Cancun, Mexico (services were shared with United Nations Headquarters owing to proximity rules and cost-effectiveness)**
  - 29 November–10 December 2010

### MEETINGS - PRINCIPAL USERS FOR 2010

- **DPI**
- **OCHA**
- **ILO**
- **ECE**
- **UNCTAD**
- **OHCHR**
- **CD**
- **UNFCCC**
- **WHO**
- **NGOs**
- ** Permanent Missions**
- **Regional and other major groupings**
- **Countries**
- **Others**

8,695 meetings with and without interpretation

Source: Emeets
Facilitating multilateral dialogue and promoting multilingualism

In 2010 UNOG made renewed efforts to reach out to Member States, the academic community and students to foster transparency and a better understanding of the efforts made to achieve language parity.

“Quality interpretation and translation are not only key to effectiveness in the multilateral process but also to reinforced dialogue for greater understanding and tolerance among cultures.”
The Director-General at the International Permanent Conference of University Institutes of Translators and Interpreters (CIUTI) Forum (29 January 2010).

As part of the overall evaluation programme of UNOG conference services, delegations were invited to six informational meetings in July 2010, one per official language, to discuss language issues such as quality of interpretation and translation, access to language resources and facilities, and improvement of services. Chiefs of interpretation booths and of editing and translation sections provided briefings and answered questions on how documents submitted by Member States are processed, how translators work and why interpretation services cannot be provided for all meetings held at the Palais des Nations. Managers explained that interpretation services are provided according to legislative mandates approved by the General Assembly in respect of all meetings and conferences included in the UNOG calendar. Member States were informed of terminology research efforts to track new terms and concepts, such as leapfrog development, and to come up with acceptable equivalents in all six languages that are shared and harmonized among all duty stations in the United Nations. The official terminology database, UNTERM, maintained by United Nations Headquarters, was also mentioned in the overview of multilingual resources available to Member States. A second round of language-specific informational meetings was held in December 2010.

UNOG hosted the CIUTI Forum entitled “Global governance and intercultural dialogue: translation and interpreting in new geopolitical settings” from 28 to 29 January 2010. This was the fifth time since 2003 that UNOG had hosted the CIUTI Forum, thus reaffirming the importance of multilingualism in the work of the United Nations. The meeting formed part of ongoing efforts to ensure the quality of professional translation and interpretation to meet the needs of the ever-changing global professional environment for highly qualified translators and interpreters.
Our Member States place particular importance on multilingual communication, with full and equitable treatment of all six official languages, as the foundation of the multilateral process and of cross-cultural understanding.

The Director-General at the CIUTI Forum (29 January 2010).

To prepare the future generation of language experts, UNOG reinforced participation in the University Outreach Programme of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM), for universities schooling students for the interpretation and translation professions. In 2010, UNOG facilitated the signing of memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with the École Supérieure d’Interprètes et de Traducteurs (ESIT) in the Université Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris 3, and the Institut de management et de communication interculturels (ISIT), both located in Paris, France, and the School of Translation and Interpretation, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Russian Federation. UNOG provided pedagogical assistance to these and other universities with MOUs and to the School of Translation and Interpretation of the University of Geneva (ETI), including hands-on training sessions and information on recruitment.

Following the launch of the large-scale language internship programme initiated by DGACM this year, UNOG hosted a total of 14 interns this spring and summer at the Palais des Nations as part of the workforce succession assurance programme.

As in previous years, UNOG provided secretariat services to the International Annual Meeting on Computer-Assisted Translation and Terminology (JIAMCATT), which was hosted by the European Commission in Luxembourg, from 28 to 30 April 2010. Three main areas were discussed: terminology cooperation among international organizations, machine translation and the changing roles and functions of linguists with the use of computers, electronic dictionaries and the Internet.

The United Nations family is characterized by a rich linguistic and cultural diversity and it also pursues multilingualism as a means of globally promoting, protecting and preserving this plurality of languages and cultures. It is keenly aware of the importance of communicating to the peoples of the world in their own languages to ensure an effective multilateral process.

Multilingualism is an integral part of multilateralism. It is a reflection of our cultural plurality, which is the foundation of our collective progress.

The Director-General at the round-table discussion on multilingualism in international organizations: challenges of diversity (24 March 2010).

On the occasion of International Mother Language Day on 21 February 2010, the Department of Public Information announced the launch of “Language Days at the United Nations”, a new initiative which seeks to celebrate multilingualism and cultural diversity. UNOG joined in these celebrations, namely the Spanish language day on 12 October, traditionally observed in...
Spanish-speaking countries as *Día de la Hispanidad*, and the Arabic language day on 8 December, the date on which the General Assembly designated Arabic as the sixth official language of the United Nations in 1973. UNOG celebrations of each of the six official languages include information materials and cultural events showcasing each language through music, art, poetry, food, theatre and film screenings.

Furthermore, in order to mark the *Journée Internationale de la Francophonie* (20 March), UNOG and the International Organization of la Francophonie held a round-table discussion on multilingualism in international organizations: challenges of diversity at the Palais des Nations. The Director-General of UNOG, the Permanent Representative of Djibouti to UNOG and President of the Group of Francophone Ambassadors, Mr. Mohamed Siad Doualeh, and the Permanent Observer of the International Organization of la Francophonie to UNOG, Mr. Libère Bararunyeretse, made statements, and a general debate with participants followed the round-table discussion.

UNOG continues to assist OHCHR Special Rapporteurs and holders of Special Procedures mandates. Their reports feed directly into the decision-making process of the human rights mechanism. In 2010, a total of 39 human rights missions or field visits to 29 countries or regions were supported by UNOG. Eleven human rights missions requiring non-United Nations languages were serviced by local interpreters under UNOG responsibility. These included two missions to the Gaza Strip to service the United Nations fact-finding mission on the Gaza conflict, which conducted interviews and investigations in the region and beyond. Conference services were also provided to the Secretary-General during his visits to Benin, Burundi, Cameroon and Ethiopia, and to the Geneva International Discussions involving OSCE, the European Union and the United Nations.

UNOG placed greater emphasis on staff training to enhance language skills and increase ease and reliability in interpretation of speeches and statements. Interpreters attended advanced training courses in the Russian Federation, Spain and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. In addition to interpreter trainees, UNOG had also hosted and coached a large number of students in interpretation from universities in China, France, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. The exposure to a real conference setting has proved critical in orienting the next generation of conference interpreters.

### Streamlining documentation management

UNOG continues to be innovative in its delivery of conference services to Member States, and to adapt and adjust its work programme to meet the challenges. Client satisfaction surveys focusing on the quality of conference services confirmed that over 95 per cent of clients and Member States were satisfied with the overall delivery of conference services.

UNOG continues to enhance technical expertise and its use of modern equipment to ensure production of high-quality conference documents and publications consistent with twenty-first century environmental norms. Documents were printed in the six official languages for major conferences, such as those of the Economic and Social Council, the Human Rights Council and the International Law Commission. Several flagship publications were printed and bound for diverse clients, such as UNCTAD, UNECE, UNEP and UNIDIR.
Following the code of ethics adopted by participants at an Environmental and Sustainable Publishing Workshop held at United Nations Headquarters in New York in November 2008, and as part of system-wide efforts to implement the concept of sustainable publishing, UNOG obtained ISO 14001:2004 environmental certification for its printing and distribution operations. An Environmental Management System has been implemented, and official certification by a third-party entity was completed in October 2010 (see the Special Feature on greening the blue: UNOG working for a sustainable future).

As one of the largest conference centres in the world, UNOG pays close attention to the continuous improvement in the quality of its services, and works in constant cooperation with Member States and its clients to better address their needs, with due regard to budgetary realities.