

Practical Guide

to document preparation

Legal Affairs Directorate and Ethics Office



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Practical guide

to the preparation and presentation of documents, for authors of documents submitted to UPU bodies and for secretaries and assistant secretaries

DAJ
February 2011

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I. Foreword

The general purpose of this guide is to facilitate the work of meeting sessions and, in particular, to improve the quality of documents submitted to UPU bodies, so as to ensure the efficiency of meetings and the clarity of decisions taken.

It is designed to make all authors aware of the issues surrounding document presentation and encourage them to follow a number of rules aimed at improving their presentation in the interests of the Union.

II. Introduction

1 Why change?

Because there are ways of doing things better and faster

This means:

- i speeding up document production (preparation, editing, translation);
- ii facilitating the editing and translation work;
- iii enabling rapid distribution of documents;
- iv facilitating delegates' work;
- v ensuring that decisions have a sound legal basis;
- vi reducing the length of sessions.

2 What do we need to change?

- i Our habits.
- ii Our thinking.
- iii The idea that a long document is proof of intense and productive labour.

3 A reminder

French is the sole official language of the Union (Constitution, article 6)

- The French version of the Acts constitutes the official text.
- The UPU International Bureau's translation services are institutionally organized for the translation of texts from French into other languages.
- English is a working language of the International Bureau.

4 A few basic rules

- i A French speaker should always write in French.
- ii An English speaker should always write in English.
- iii Authors whose first language is neither French nor English should write in whichever of these two languages they know best.

III. How can we change?

5 General

5.1 Basic principles of good communication

Whatever is well conceived is clearly said! (Nicolas Boileau)

Too much information kills information!

5.2 Uniform presentation

Presentation of documents and reports according to a uniform, simplified model serves to:

- strengthen the organization's coherence;
- speed up and improve the reliability of the document production process;
- facilitate and improve the work of the UPU bodies;
- avoid duplications of effort between different working groups, committees and the plenary.

5.3 Reducing length

Sorry to have gone on at such length, I didn't have the time to be more brief!

Why do we write such long documents or reports?

- Out of habit?
- So as to omit no detail?
- Because of a lack of organization?
- Because we find it hard to write in a foreign language?
- Because we want to please our chairman or boss?

5.4 A few rules for writing clearly and concisely

- Clarify the aims of the document before you start writing it.
- Prepare documents sufficiently far in advance.
- Use short, simple sentences (subject, verb and complement).
- Simply refer back to existing documents rather than summarizing or annexing them.
- Avoid repetition.
- Prepare the basic structure of a report before the meeting (introduction, body text, likely conclusions).
- Put your draft document to one side and review it afresh later.
- Carefully reread prepared documents before submitting them to the director for signature (and always get a document in French reread by a French speaker or a document in English reread by an English speaker first).
- Write in a simple, neutral, concise way:
 - Documents:
 - Refer to a member country or function, rather than to the name of a delegate or chair.
 - Refer to the International Bureau rather than to the name of an individual UPU official.
 - Reports:
 - Provide a brief summary of the discussions and avoid giving all the background to them.
 - Clearly and succinctly set out the results of the discussions: you are writing a report of a meeting, not the minutes and not a novel.

5.5 Examination at a single level

Do not submit for approval by a higher body the conclusions already reached at another level. In other words, do not ask the plenary to rule on a decision already taken by a committee.

Example: amendments to the Staff Regulations

<i>Document</i>	<i>CA committee</i>	<i>Plenary</i>
Proposal by working group to amend article XX of the Staff Regulations Annex: proposed amendment to the Staff Regulations	Approves/defers/rejects the proposal to amend article XX of the Staff Regulations	
Report of committee summarizing the decisions taken Annex: proposed amendment to the Staff Regulations		Takes note of the committee's report. Endorses the CA committee's decisions on amendment of the Staff Regulations (and rules on any appeals against the committee's decisions)

5.6 Tables and graphs

– Documents

Graphical representations (e.g. tables, line charts, etc.) are recommended in documents if they make the subject at hand easier to grasp and avoid the need for long-winded explanations.

However, the presence of graphs complicates and slows down the work of the formatting units. Documents with such elements often require extensive reformatting.

– Reports

Reports should summarize the essential elements of discussions and list the conclusions. Graphs add nothing in this context.

Moreover, reports needing to be produced and translated in a very short time-frame should only contain complex graphs or tables as an absolute exception, if their inclusion is considered essential by the relevant secretary.

In conclusion, graphical representations are:

- recommended in documents;
- generally to be avoided in reports.

5.7 Document presentation box

The presentation box is designed to:

- i harmonize the presentation of documents;
- ii encourage the author to structure his or her document;
- iii promote compliance with the procedural rules of the permanent and subsidiary UPU bodies;
- iv facilitate the task of the presenter of the document or report;
- v facilitate the chair's management of the meeting (particularly in the case of an appeal in plenary) and help with decision-making;
- vi enable delegates to rapidly grasp the content of documents/reports and the decisions expected of them;
- vii speed up the drafting of meeting reports;
- viii reduce the length of meetings.

6 Document

6.1 Model document presentation box



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CEP C XX 2011.1–Doc 33¹
(POC C XX 2011.1–Doc 33)

POSTAL OPERATIONS COUNCIL

Committee XX

Title²

Berne, 00 xxxx 0000 (time), room (*date of the meeting*)

Type of document³ (Agenda item 33¹)

<p>1 Subject⁴</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Xxx. – Yyy. – Zzz. 	<p>References/paragraphs⁵</p> <p>§§ 0 to 0</p>
<p>2 Decision expected⁶</p> <p>Xxx.</p>	<p>Annex 0</p>

6.2 Comments on the presentation box

- 1 Number of document = number of agenda item.
- 2 Title of document = title of agenda item.
- 3 Type of document (see Internal Rules, Annex 3, section III): just one author.
No joint International Bureau/member country documents.
- 4 The "Subject" field contains a list of the essential elements contained in the document, in telegraphic style:
 - Document section headings (to enable rapid reference to the relevant paragraphs of the document).
 - No sentences.
- 5 References/paragraphs:
 - Contains paragraph numbers and other references for the elements listed under "Subject".
 - All paragraphs of the document should be covered.
 - Annexes: draft Regulations, resolution, recommendation, formal opinion, etc.
- 6 Decision expected:
 - List of decisions expected in telegraphic style (no sentences).
 - Take note of ≠ approve.
 - Depends on the subject and the responsibilities of the body called upon to take a decision.
 - Appears only in the presentation box (not at the end of the document).

6.3 Keep the introduction short

- Avoid background information unless essential to understanding of the subject.
- Keep the introduction as short as possible, referring to the document containing the decision on the work to be carried out (e.g. Congress resolution, decision of a body) and to subsequent documents on the same subject.

6.4 Avoid reproducing anything that already exists elsewhere

- Avoid annexing or reproducing long extracts from another document. Just give the document reference number (and possibly provide a link for accessing it).
- In the case of an external document (e.g. a UN document), make it available to delegates (by providing a link to it).

But...

...reproducing a short extract from a document can save the reader time.

7 Report¹

7.1 Aims

- Decision-making and supervisory responsibilities

The responsibilities of the councils are defined in the General Regulations. A council may delegate certain responsibilities to its bodies, but must oversee their work, and may also need to endorse their decisions.

- Recording formal conditions of decisions

Committee decisions are valid only if taken in line with the rules regarding quorums and the required majorities. The quorum must be systematically checked by the secretariat at the beginning of each committee meeting and recorded:

- In the event of a vote on a subject, the number of votes for or against and the number of abstentions must be indicated in the report.
- It is essential to be precise in the event of an appeal.

- Recording decisions taken on substantive issues and decisions expected

Reports should exhaustively detail the decisions taken and those expected.

- Supervision

Reports permit supervision of the activities delegated to council bodies and serve to guarantee that decisions have a sound legal basis.

¹ Applies to all types of reports (committees, working groups, forums, etc.).

7.2 Form

Preliminary remark: There are no regulatory provisions on the form reports should take. But written reports are useful and necessary.

A council approves the report of a committee or other subsidiary body that reports directly to it.

In addition, in certain cases giving rise to a discussion within a committee, a formal decision is required on the part of the plenary (e.g. revision of Regulations, resolutions, recommendations, formal opinions, or amendments to the Staff Regulations).

Where a decision has been taken by a committee, the plenary must formally endorse it (link to appeal procedure). The proposed decision submitted to the committee should be annexed to the report (important in the event of an appeal).

When the council is expected to take a formal decision, the proposed decision should likewise be annexed to the report. The report should explicitly refer to it under "Decision expected", distinguishing between decisions that the plenary is invited to endorse and other decisions needing to be taken directly by the plenary.

A report is not the minutes of a meeting (i.e. a record of everything said or done during a meeting).

So reports should be short, precise, complete and systematic.

7.3 Model report presentation box

	UPU UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION	CEP 2011.1–Doc 5 ¹ (POC 2011.1–Doc 5)									
POSTAL OPERATIONS COUNCIL											
Title²											
Berne, 00 xxxx 0000 (time), room (<i>date of the meeting</i>)											
Report of Committee XX/subsidiary body (cooperative, QSF Board of Trustees, user group, etc.) (Agenda item 5 ¹)											
<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="304 869 320 898">1</td> <td data-bbox="360 869 472 898">Subject³</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="304 931 320 960">–</td> <td data-bbox="360 931 408 960">Xxx.</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="304 976 320 1005">–</td> <td data-bbox="360 976 408 1005">Yyy.</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="304 1021 320 1050">–</td> <td data-bbox="360 1021 408 1050">Zzz.</td> </tr> </table>	1	Subject³	–	Xxx.	–	Yyy.	–	Zzz.	<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="1091 869 1374 898">References/paragraphs⁴</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1091 931 1190 960">§§ 0 to 0</td> </tr> </table>	References/paragraphs⁴	§§ 0 to 0
1	Subject³										
–	Xxx.										
–	Yyy.										
–	Zzz.										
References/paragraphs⁴											
§§ 0 to 0											
<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="304 1111 320 1140">2</td> <td data-bbox="360 1111 584 1140">Decision expected⁵</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="304 1173 320 1202">–</td> <td data-bbox="360 1173 408 1202">Xxx.</td> </tr> </table>	2	Decision expected⁵	–	Xxx.	<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="1091 1173 1182 1202">Annex 0</td> </tr> </table>	Annex 0					
2	Decision expected⁵										
–	Xxx.										
Annex 0											

Additional information⁶

...

7.4 Comments on the presentation box

¹ Number of report = number of agenda item.

² Title of report = name of committee or subsidiary body.

³ Subject:

- List of themes of decisions taken: in telegraphic style.
- No sentences.

⁴ References/paragraphs:

- As necessary, indicate document reference numbers and paragraph or annex numbers concerned by the information provided under "Subject".

- All the documents examined by the committee or by the subsidiary body should be covered.
- Mandatory annexes: formal opinion/resolution/recommendation/decision/proposal concerning the Regulations/proposals concerning the Staff Regulations on which the committee has taken a decision/proposed formal opinion/resolution/recommendation/decision submitted to the plenary.
- Other possible annexes: intervention which a delegate has asked to be reproduced verbatim; reference document not already published elsewhere.

⁵ Decision expected:

- List of decisions expected in telegraphic style (no sentences).
- Take note of ≠ approve.
- Certain committee decisions have to be endorsed by the plenary.

⁶ Additional information (brief commentary) on decisions taken/expected:

- Decisions taken following a vote: indication of number of votes for and against and number abstaining: important in the event of an appeal.
- Commentary on issues that gave rise to discussions.
- Information needed in order to guide the plenary on decisions it is called upon to take (e.g. given the nature of problem XX, the committee wishes to see article RL ZZ enter into force as soon as possible).

7.5 Fictitious example



CEP 2011.1–Doc 6
(POC 2011.1–Doc 6)

POSTAL OPERATIONS COUNCIL

(Agenda item 6)

Committee 1 report

Berne, 00 xxxx 0000 (time), room (*date of the meeting*)

1 Subject	References/paragraphs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Amendment of the Letter Post Regulations – Basic air conveyance rate 	<p>§§ 1 to XXX §§</p>
<p>2 Decisions expected</p> <p>The Postal Operations Council is invited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – take note of this report; – endorse Committee 1's decisions concerning the amendment of the Letter Post Regulations; – set the date of entry into force of the amendments to the Letter Post Regulations, by adopting the annexed draft decision; – endorse Committee 1's decision regarding the new basic air conveyance rate, by adopting the annexed draft decision. 	<p>Annexes 1 to 5 Annex 6 Annex 7</p>

I. Brief summary of the results of the work of the body concerned and decisions taken by Xxx

1 During its meetings on 3 and 4 February 2011, Committee 1:

a Liability

- approved the need to urgently amend article RL 155 of the Letter Post Regulations on the application of designated operators' liability (Annex 1);
- adopted the proposal to amend article RL 155 (Annex 2);
- recommended setting 1 August 2011 as the date of entry into force of the amended article RL 155 (Annex 3);

b Settlement of accounts

- rejected the proposal by Finland to amend article RL 246 (Annex 4);
- adopted the proposed amendments to articles RL 247 and RL 248 (Annex 5);
- adopted a new article RL 249bis (Annex 6);

c Airmail

- approved the new basic air conveyance rate (Annex 7).

II. Additional information on Committee 1's work**a** *Liability*

(POC C 1 2011.1–Doc 2)

2 The Liability Working Group submitted to Committee 1 a proposal to amend article RL 155 of the Letter Post Regulations. Committee 1 accepted the urgent need¹ for this revision by consensus, in the light of recent developments that had highlighted abuses in the declaration of force majeure. This proposal was adopted by 21 votes in favour, 15 against and 2 abstentions. Given the urgency of the situation, the committee recommends setting 1 August 2011 as the date of entry into force of this provision.

b *Settlement of accounts*

3 Committee 1 rejected the proposal by Finland concerning article RL 246 by 18 votes against, 17 in favour, and 2 abstaining. This proposal aimed to make mandatory the electronic transmission of forms and deadlines provided for in article RL 246. Opposition to this proposal was based on the fact that not all designated operators were as yet able to transmit these data electronically.

4 Committee 1 adopted the proposals on articles RL 247 and 248. At the suggestion of Sweden, it approved a new article 249bis concerning the payment of debts denominated in euros.

c *Airmail*

5 Within the framework of its work, the Transport Working Group took note of the information provided by the International Civil Aviation Organization on the impact of rising fuel prices on average operating costs, agreed to the need to modify the basic airmail conveyance rate, and proposed that a new basic rate be adopted by the committee, which approved it by consensus (POC C 1 2011.1–Doc 4. Annex 1).

Berne, 12 February 2011

J. Alfa
Chairman of Committee XX

¹ Under article 12.2 of the POC Rules of Procedure, proposals stemming from studies conducted by bodies on behalf of POC committees shall also be subject to the procedure provided for in article 12.1 when they relate to rules that have financial consequences or involve the liability of member countries and/or designated operators. Under article 12.1, proposals submitted to the POC less than six weeks before the opening of the session may be considered only if the POC agrees to the urgent necessity thereof by a majority of the members present and voting.

8 Summary record

8.1 Aims

The summary record is important for ensuring the follow-up and correct interpretation of decisions.

8.2 Content

The summary record should reflect the decisions taken by the committees/ subsidiary bodies and the plenary, based on the information contained in the presentation box of the report.

8.3 Model summary record

<p>Report of Committee 1 (Standards and Procedures)</p> <p>Agenda item 6</p>	<p>Committee 1 held two meetings on 3 and 4 February 2011 under the chairmanship of Mr J. Alfa of Bhutan. The Chairman briefly summarized the Committee's work:</p> <p><i>a Liability</i></p> <p>The Postal Operations Council (POC) endorsed the decisions of Committee 1 concerning the amendment and entry into force of article RL 213 of the Letter Post Regulations.</p> <p><i>b Settlement of accounts</i></p> <p>Within the Committee, opinions were divided on Finland's proposal concerning article RL 246, given the different levels of sophistication of the data transmission equipment available to designated operators. An appeal was presented by Finland with the aim of reopening discussion of the issue in plenary. The aim of the appeal was to amend the proposal in order to make it more flexible.</p> <p>The POC agreed to reopen the discussion and rejected the amended proposal (16 votes against, 18 in favour, 2 abstaining).</p> <p>The POC endorsed the decisions of Committee 1 concerning articles RL 247, RL 248 and RL 249bis and the entry into force of these provisions on 1 January 2012.</p> <p><i>c Airmail</i></p> <p>The POC endorsed Committee 1's decision regarding the new basic air conveyance rate.</p>
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IV. Formulation of decisions expected

Only the plenaries, committees and subsidiary bodies (cooperatives, user groups, Quality of Service Fund Board of Trustees, Direct Mail Advisory Board, etc.) can take formal decisions (rule on/approve/set).

The other bodies (groups, working groups, project teams, etc.) carry out preparatory work but take no formal decisions.

The paragraph of the document setting out the "decision expected" should therefore be formulated in such a way as to reflect the responsibilities of the bodies, as indicated below:

<i>Decision expected</i>	<i>Document submitted to:</i>			<i>plenary</i>
	<i>group/working group/project team/contact committee</i>	<i>committee</i>	<i>subsidiary body (cooperative, QSF, DMAB, user group)</i>	
General	Take note of: – the report/results of a study – the document – the proposal and make comments	Take note of: – the report/results of the study – the document – the proposal and make comments	Take note of: – the report/results of the study – the document – the proposal and make comments	Take note of: – the report of the Management Committee/Coordination Committee/POC – the document – the proposal and make comments

<i>Decision expected</i>	<i>Document submitted to:</i>			<i>plenary</i>
	<i>group/working group/project team/contact committee</i>	<i>committee</i>	<i>subsidiary body (cooperative, QSF, DMAB, user group)</i>	
General (cont.)	Examine the... and make comments	Examine the... and make comments	Examine the... and make comments	Examine the... and make comments
	Study...	Give a ruling on/approve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the proposal – the Programme and Budget – the accounts 	Give a ruling on/ approve... (only the points for which it is responsible according to the rules of the subsidiary body)	Give a ruling on/approve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the report of the committee/of the subsidiary body... – the resolution/ recommendation/ decision/formal opinion (only those elements for which the plenary is directly responsible) – the proposal – the draft Congress proposal/resolution – the draft Congress document

<i>Decision expected</i>	<i>Document submitted to:</i>			<i>plenary</i>
	<i>group/working group/project team/contact committee</i>	<i>committee</i>	<i>subsidiary body (cooperative, QSF, DMAB, user group)</i>	
General (cont.)	Endorse the report/results of a study	Endorse the report/results of a study	Endorse (in the case of points for which the subsidiary body is not responsible) the results of a study	
Decisions specific to Regulations		Charge/instruct...	Charge/instruct...	Charge/instruct...
	Recommend the adoption of the annexed proposal to amend the Regulations (to be submitted to the responsible committee)	Rule on the urgent need to revise the Regulations	Recommend the adoption of the annexed proposal to amend the Regulations (to be submitted to the responsible committee)	Endorse the committee's decisions concerning the proposals to amend the Regulations Rule on the appeal by... Set the date of entry into force of the amendments to the Regulations
		Approve the proposed amendments to the Regulations		

<i>Decision expected</i>	<i>Document submitted to:</i>			
Specific decisions relating to formal opinions, resolutions, decisions, recommendations	<i>group/working group/project team/contact committee</i>	<i>committee</i>	<i>subsidiary body (cooperative, QSF, DMAB, user group)</i>	<i>plenary</i>
	Recommend the adoption of the annexed formal opinion, resolution, decision or recommendation	Approve the draft formal opinion, resolution, decision or recommendation (for those points for which the committee is responsible)	Recommend the adoption of the annexed formal opinion, resolution, decision or recommendation	Endorse the annexed draft formal opinion, resolution, decision or recommendation