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Notes

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DPI  
Press/general**NOTE TO MR. HOGEN****A Global UN TV Channel**

Thank you for your note of 25 January outlining your efforts to convert the United Nations Television cable channel into a more effective media outlet. I understand this was discussed in the Communications Group and that DPI is in the process of examining ways of following up on the suggestions that came out of the World TV Forum dialogue last November.

I am encouraged by the progress that has been made and look forward to being kept informed of developments.

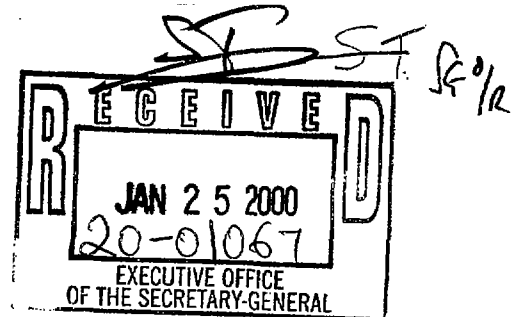


Kofi A. Annan  
7 February 2000



**Note to the Secretary-General**

Ref: A Global UN TV Channel



As you had requested, we have been working on gathering information on how best to convert the UNTV cable channel into a more effective media outlet. This information is summarised in the attached report, which details the requirements and implications of operating a TV channel. Based on this report, and some excellent guidance from Mr. Shashi Tharoor, we were able to present a set of conclusions and proposed actions to the Communications Group last Tuesday. There was consensus in the Group about three central issues:

1. Running a full-functioning cable channel to a standard which would enhance the United Nations image would cost tens of millions of dollars. Indeed, DPI twice in the 1990s studied the question but concluded both times that such a channel was too expensive to operate.
2. The best way to proceed, therefore, was through a more modest, incremental and interim approach. Using the approximately two hours of television programming that the United Nations system produces a week, and supplementing it with documentaries and other programmes of both current and historical interest, it should be possible to establish a limited programme schedule of a few hours a week. This would be in addition to the live feeds that are featured at the moment, although their presentation would also be upgraded.
3. Since DPI staff have absolutely no experience in operating a TV channel, the department will hire a consultant who will study this issue fully and present a comprehensive report on the subject. That report, and our own limited experience in the forthcoming months with the interim measures described in paragraph 2, should enable the Organization to make a definitive decision on the best way to proceed on the question of a cable channel.

Whatever the outcome of the actions we are about to embark on, DPI is aware that reaching the very small mid-Manhattan audience offered by Channel 78 could be a possible stepping stone to the global UNTV satellite operation that was proposed by Mr. Jean-Pierre Elkabbach and others during the TV Forum "Dialogue" that you led in November. This immensely exciting prospect seems a daunting, distant dream at the moment. However, the convergence between the radio, television and internet mediums (which offers infinitely less expensive global communications possibilities), the growing philanthropic impulses evidenced by communications magnates Ted Turner and Bill Gates, and the support that a number of influential network executives at the UN Television Forum voiced for a global public service channel, could make that dream rather less distant than imagined.

In this larger context, I should mention that I had lunch in December with a prominent French media developer, Mr. Sasha Goldman, and Mr. Yves Doutriaux, the

*Let's acknowledge with an engagement -*

*[Signature]*

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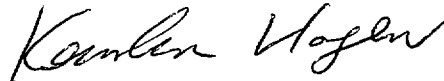
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Deputy Permanent Representative of France. Mr. Goldman is undertaking a study in conjunction with the French government about the prospects of a global multi-media channel, and has talked to Mr. Elkabbach and a number of other French media executives.

We have already contacted all UN system partners to seek a complete listing of their current and archival TV materials which could be aired on Channel 78. A visit to the studios of C-Span and the CUNY cable channels is also planned shortly.

In DPI, we have recognised that we need to use this enormously influential medium more effectively, and have begun to make efforts in that pursuit. We were unsuccessful in persuading our budgetary authorities to upgrade a P5 television post to D1 for the 2000-2001 biennium, so we have decided to deploy an existing D1 post to Television once the incumbent retires in August 2000. But much more important in this effort is the knowledge of your own quite clear commitment to projecting the UN message more effectively through television.

I hope to send an update on our initial efforts to upgrade the content of Channel 78 in the early spring.



Kensaku Hogen  
25 January 2000

cc: Mr. S. Tharoor  
Mr. S. Lone