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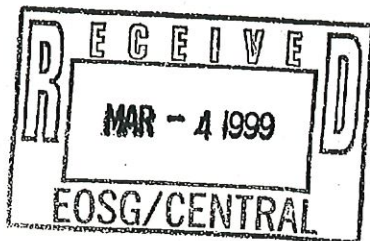
**NOTE TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
(through Mr. Riza)**

Media guidelines

Please find attached the final draft media guidelines, which have been endorsed by the Communications Group and include the input of Mr. Riza. The most important provisions are highlighted.

I would be grateful for your approval. Once approved, I would recommend that the guidelines be circulated to all Heads of Department for them to distribute to their own staff as appropriate. We would propose that all EOSG and DPI staff get copies. It was also agreed in the Communications Group that the Spokesman should announce at a noon briefing that the guidelines exist and should make them available to any journalist who is interested (as they are certain to leak in any case).

Thank you.



Shashi Tharoor
Shashi Tharoor
3 March 1999

- cc. The Deputy Secretary-General (o/r)
- Mr. Hogen
- Mr. Lone
- Mr. Eckhard
- Mr. Mortimer

ROUTING SLIP

FICHE DE TRANSMISSION

TO: Mr. Riza
A:FROM: Shashi Tharoor
DE:Room No. - No de bureau Extension Poste Date
S- 3802D 2912 3 March 1999

FOR ACTION	POUR SUITE A DONNER
FOR APPROVAL	POUR APPROBATION
FOR SIGNATURE	POUR SIGNATURE
FOR COMMENTS	POUR OBSERVATIONS
MAY WE DISCUSS?	POURRIONS-NOUS EN PARLER ?
YOUR ATTENTION	VOTRE ATTENTION
AS DISCUSSED	COMME CONVENU
AS REQUESTED	SUITE A VOTRE DEMANDE
NOTE AND RETURN	NOTER ET RETOURNER
FOR INFORMATION	POUR INFORMATION

Jpbal,

Enclosed please find the draft media guidelines under cover of a note to the Secretary-General, through you. Fatemeh's very useful suggestions have all been incorporated. Others have raised questions about the annex as well, but it was generally felt that the tips are useful reminders and worth including (even if they do make us the butt of jokes in the media)!



UNITED NATIONS SECRETARIAT RELATIONS WITH THE MEDIA

The Policy

1. There is hardly an international news event today that doesn't have some United Nations angle. We want the world's media to report the United Nations side of each story fully, fairly and accurately. For that to happen, the United Nations itself must be open and transparent in its dealings with the press. Indeed, wherever appropriate, we must be out in front projecting our point of view on important international developments in which the UN is an actor; a reactive stance or defence has much less credibility.

2. Public understanding of the United Nations is the key to political support. The media provide us with the quickest and best way to reach the public at large. It is therefore in our interest to service the media quickly and honestly, and to develop a coherent communications strategy based on those same principles.

3. As an organization of Member States that often engages in sensitive diplomacy, however, we must sometimes keep confidences--not to mislead or conceal, but to protect a diplomatic process. Our media policy must therefore balance the need to be open and the need to respect confidentiality.

Speaking to the press

4. The principal voice of the Organization is the Secretary-General. He speaks to the media frequently, at Headquarters and when travelling. But he cannot, and does not want to, restrict this to himself.

5. Media policy is part of the overall communications strategy for the UN, the development of which is co-ordinated by the Director of Communications in the Office of the Secretary-General. That strategy is aimed at defining a consistent message for the Organization and ensuring a coherent approach to the world's media.

6. The Secretary-General's Spokesman's Office is made up of professionals who speak to journalists on his behalf throughout the day. DPI professionals, including Directors of UN Information Centres, also interact regularly with the media on matters related to their responsibilities. As the media professionals cannot be experts in all subjects, they seek the assistance of UN specialists -- either to provide them with information that they can pass on to the press or to speak directly to the journalists themselves.

7. Direct contact between UN specialists and the media is often more practical and even desirable. The journalist can get more in-depth information, and the United Nations gets to display its expertise to the world.

8. As a matter of principle then, every member of the Secretariat may speak to the press, within certain limits:

- speak within your area of competence and responsibility;
- provide facts, not opinions or comment;
- leave sensitive issues to officials who are specifically authorized to speak on them (see paragraphs 9 and 10 below).

Sensitive issues

9. The Spokesman will speak on sensitive issues on the basis of guidance provided by the Office of the Secretary-General or Heads of Department. The number of other officials speaking on such issues must necessarily be limited.

10. Designated members of the Secretary-General's staff may speak on sensitive issues. Heads of Department may address sensitive issues within their areas of competence and may authorize members of their staffs to speak on the basis of guidance.

11. For those authorized to speak on sensitive issues, it is usually a good idea to check with the Director of Communications or the Spokesman before speaking to a journalist, in order to be briefed about the journalist's particular interest in the story. Sometimes even a seemingly innocuous comment by an official can become the basis of an important story in the context of what the journalist is pursuing.

12. No staff member should presume or pretend to speak for the Secretary-General without his explicit consent.

Sharing information

13. For the United Nations to communicate effectively with the outside world, it must do the same internally.

14. Department heads, senior members of Office of the Secretary-General, Heads of Mission and Special Envoys should share information with those under their supervision.

15. Senior Secretariat officials should keep each other informed of their media activities.

16. Officials who speak to journalists directly should inform the Spokesman's Office afterward so that office has a sense of the questions asked and answers given. Reporting back will keep the process more open and help sustain the Spokesman's standing with the press. He certainly should be as well informed as the press are.

"On the record", "not for attribution" and "on deep background"

17. All UN officials should normally speak to journalists on the record--that is, for attribution. That is best for the journalist, and best for the Organization. You should be prepared to stand behind what you say.

18. Sometimes, though, officials specifically authorized to address sensitive issues can give a journalist a deeper understanding of an issue by speaking on background. Because the term "background" can have different meanings, such officials are urged to establish clearly at the outset of their conversation the basis on which they are speaking:

--"everything I say can be attributed to me by name" (**on the record**), or

--"don't attribute this to me by name, but rather to a UN official" (**on background, not for attribution**), or

--"use my ideas but not my words; don't attribute to anyone" (**deep background**).

19. The Secretary-General's Spokesman must be kept informed of background briefings and interviews.

Ground rules

20. Journalists compete with each other. Do not betray a confidence by telling one journalist what another is working on. Similarly, do not suggest that one journalist discuss a pending story with another.

21. Do not feel obliged to answer hypothetical questions.

22. Never discuss the policies or internal politics of Member States--not even "on deep background."

New York
3 March 1999

APPENDIX

Useful tips in conducting interviews

Our colleagues in the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees developed "General Public Information Guidelines for Field Staff." We thought they were so good, we adapted them for our staff:

1. **BE YOURSELF.** While journalists are always on the lookout for a good story, they are not out to make your life miserable. So relax and be friendly. If they call and you're not in, try to return their call as soon as possible.

2. **BE REALISTIC.** Journalists are intelligent persons. Too many organizations think they can manipulate the media for their own purposes, "using" them when they want to and ignoring them the rest of the time. They think journalists will swallow any line thrown at them.

3. But most reporters know when someone is trying to "use" them simply for the sake of publicizing something that is self-serving and not even newsworthy. So try not to be patronizing, and do not presume that the message you want to get across is the same one the journalist is interested in.

4. **BE OPEN.** The very nature of the work of the United Nations means we encounter many problems. Most journalists understand this and respect our efforts. Mistakes will inevitably be made. We should not try to hide these problems and difficulties. However, keep in mind that questions dealing with sensitive issues should be referred to officials who are specifically authorized to speak on such issues.

5. **BE PATIENT.** Journalists are often pressured by very strict deadlines and at times become impatient and expect to be briefed immediately. Don't let that disturb your good humour--a negative attitude might taint the journalist's judgment of the Organization.

6. **BE FACTUAL.** Talk about your work in concrete terms. Give facts and figures. Talking with journalists is almost like briefing a delegate or a colleague. There's no need to panic. Remember that you know more than they do, and you probably have most of the information they need.

7. Journalists want factual information. If you are talking about a peacekeeping operation, they would want to know things like the start date of the mission, the number of troops, the budget, and the mandate spelled out in clear, concise language.

8. Journalists also want to know about the problems you face, and what you are doing to overcome these difficulties. **Experience shows that openness and frankness usually result in a report sympathetic to the United Nations.**

9. **BE INTERESTING.** Sticking to the facts doesn't mean you have to be boring. There are many ways of illustrating the facts, problems, challenges and success of your work. Journalists like colourful human interest stories that can bring to life the dry facts and statistics.

10. If you know of someone involved in especially interesting work or with an interesting background or dramatic personal story to tell that will add to the journalist's understanding of your operations, by all means introduce that person to the journalist.

11. **BE POSITIVE.** Do not criticize colleagues, other UN system activities or Member States.

12. **BE ACCURATE.** If you do not know the answer to a question, say so and offer to follow up on it and get back to the journalist with a reply. That is the correct approach and it adds to our credibility.

13. **BE SMART.** Use your common sense. Don't feel you have to answer every question. Don't feel tempted to comment on issues which are not your direct responsibility. Above all, remain strictly factual in describing the nature of the problems you are dealing with. **Policy issues of a general nature or topics you feel are too sensitive should be dealt with by responsible senior officials, most often the head of your office.**

14. **BE CONVERSATIONAL.** When you talk to journalists, keep it simple and clear. Avoid UN jargon and the type of language found in many UN documents. In everyday conversation, ordinary people don't use terms like "modalities", "inter-alia" and "NGO."

15. **BE CONCISE.** A ten-minute interview may end up being 20 seconds on the air, or three lines in a newspaper. It is essential to crystallize your thoughts in a few hard-hitting sentences.

16. **BE PERSONAL.** Use your interviewer's name once or twice in your answers and look directly at him or her.

17. **BE AWARE.** During an interview, don't get sidetracked. Don't let the interviewer put words in your mouth. Don't argue, or attack the media.

18. **BE PHOTOGENIC.** If you are being interviewed for television, try to get a UN logo in the background. Avoid nervous gestures and mannerisms. Keep your answers short and simple. In the field, don't wear sunglasses, no matter what. Keep your hair off the face and always look at the reporter, not the camera.