


UNO403
EOSG
Press/general

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

Media guidelines

As requested, please find attached a tighter version of the draft media guidelines, without the annex on "useful tips". I would be grateful for your approval.




Shashi Tharoor
8 March 1999

cc. The Deputy Secretary-General
Mr. Hogen
Mr. Lone
Mr. Eckhard
Mr. Mortimer

UNITED NATIONS SECRETARIAT RELATIONS WITH THE MEDIA

The Policy

1. The United Nations must be open and transparent in its dealings with the press. It is in our interest to work with the media quickly and honestly, and to develop a coherent communications strategy based on those same principles. We should not only react to events but, where appropriate, project our point of view on important international developments. 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

2. The principal voice of the Organization is the Secretary-General. He speaks to the media frequently, at Headquarters and when travelling.

3. Media policy is part of the overall communications strategy for the UN, responsibility for which resides with the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information and the Director of Communications in the Office of the Secretary-General.

4. The Secretary-General's Spokesman and his office speak to journalists on the Secretary-General's behalf throughout the day. DPI professionals, including Directors of UN Information Centres, also interact regularly with the media. As these 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.

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

- speak only 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 paragraph 6 below).

Sensitive issues

6. The number of officials speaking on sensitive issues must necessarily be limited to:

- the Spokesman, on the basis of guidance;
- designated members of the Secretary-General's staff and Heads of Department, within their areas of competence;
- staff authorized by their Heads of Department, on the basis of guidance.

7. Those authorized to speak on sensitive issues may wish 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.

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

Sharing information

9. For the United Nations to communicate effectively with the outside world, it must do the same internally. Senior officials should share information with those under their supervision and should keep each other informed of their media activities.

10. 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.

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

11. All UN officials should normally speak to journalists on the record -- that is, for attribution. Sometimes, though, **officials specifically authorized to address sensitive issues** can give a journalist a deeper understanding of an issue by speaking on background. 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**).

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

Ground rules

13. 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.

14. Do not feel you have to answer every question. Do not feel obliged to answer hypothetical questions.

15. Never discuss the policies or internal politics of Member States.

New York
8 March 1999

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2. The principal voice of the Organization is the Secretary-General. He speaks to the media frequently, at Headquarters and when travelling.

3. Media policy is an integral component of the broader communications and public information work of the Organization, headed by the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information. The Director of Communications in the Office of the Secretary-General is responsible for coordinating the development of a communications strategy for the United Nations to ensure a coherent approach to the world's media that would help project a consistent message for the Organization.

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New York, 31 March 1999

NOTE FOR MR. SHASHI THAROOR

Subject: Media Guidelines

Thank you for sending me the latest version of the media guidelines. As requested, I have paid careful attention to the text, which I find completely satisfactory. I would suggest a very minor change in the last sentence of paragraph 3, as indicated below:

"...a coherent approach to the world's media that would help project a consistent message for the Organization."

The proposed change is not crucial, of course.



Kensaku Hogen
19 March 1999

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SG-

this section
redrafted
as discussed.

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(1/15)