



# General Assembly

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## Seventy-eighth session

Item 142 of the preliminary list\*

### Pattern of conferences

## Pattern of conferences

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### *Summary*

The present report has been prepared pursuant to resolution [77/255](#) and previous resolutions on the subject and responds to the mandates addressed to the Secretary-General contained therein. It also provides information on procedures and activities relating to the pattern of conferences in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi in 2022.

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\* [A/78/50](#).



## I. Introduction

1. In 2022, the Secretariat's conference management operations continued to ensure the smooth provision of conference services for intergovernmental processes in a globally coordinated manner in line with the mandates provided by the General Assembly in its resolutions on the pattern of conferences. In that endeavour, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management was guided by the principles of client orientation, cost-efficiency and enhanced quality of services, as well as the accessibility of services and the sustainability of its operations.

2. In the aftermath of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the strengthening of business continuity measures and continued investment in technology remained paramount and progress was made in integrating tools that are crucial to implementing the Department's mandate with other enterprise software systems, such as Umoja and Inspira. These tools continue to be further refined and sustainably maintained by a specialized team of computational linguists and experts on multilingual conference solutions, paving the way for further innovation, the provision of better and new services for Member States and improved transparency and accountability in conference management operations.

3. In line with the Data Strategy of the Secretary-General, new skill sets were developed in order to operate and further improve the enterprise conference management solutions created and used by the Department. This was supported by a continued focus on training, systematic succession planning and active outreach to academic and professional communities. Partnerships within the global community of providers of services to intergovernmental bodies were key to ensuring effective knowledge-sharing and the leveraging of global best practices.

4. With a view to further enhancing the integrated global management of conference resources, coordination meetings continued to ensure that conference operations in Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi were harmonized with the provisions of the Secretary-General's bulletin on the organization of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management ([ST/SGB/2021/3](#)). The planned new bulletins pertaining to Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi will be issued once other elements not related to conference services have been finalized.

## II. Meetings management

5. In 2022, the Department continued to deliver high-quality multilingual conference services as restrictions from the pandemic were incrementally lifted at all four duty stations, allowing conference services to gradually return to a "normal" mode of servicing of the intergovernmental process. In New York, the number of in-person meetings increased significantly compared with 2021, and in the second half of the year non-intergovernmental events began to return to the premises. In Geneva, all mandated United Nations meetings were serviced, but capacity for side events and parallel and ad hoc events was limited owing to room closures associated with renovation work under the strategic heritage plan. Measures have been taken to mitigate the impact of further renovation work in building E, scheduled for the second half of 2023.

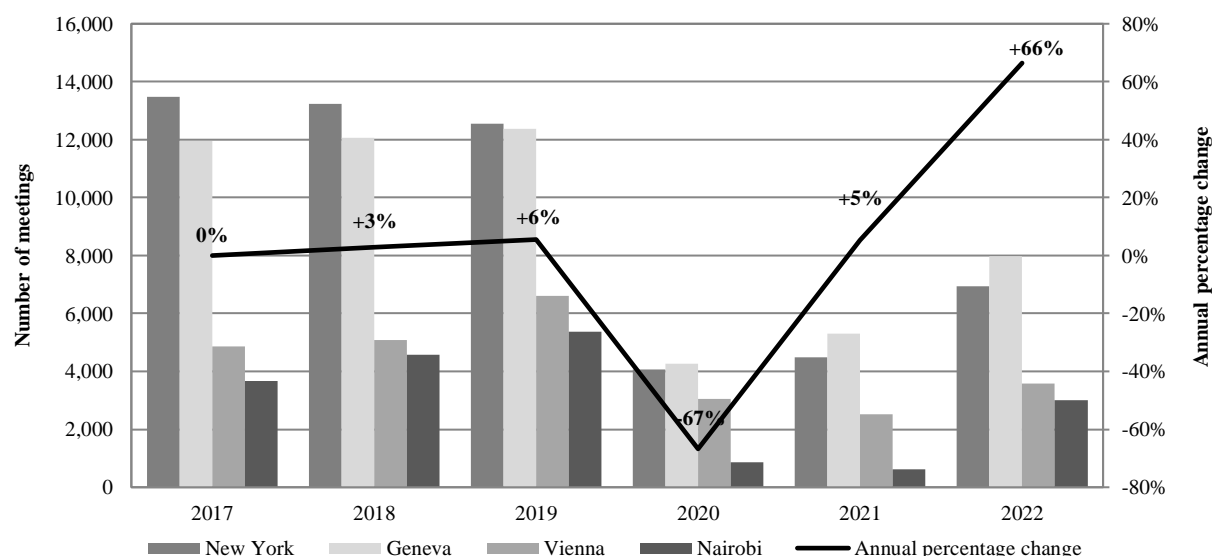
6. In Vienna, side events and special events were again held at the Vienna International Centre and it is expected that the number of side events will return to pre-pandemic levels in 2023, with organizers continuing to request technical services to support remote participation for wider access. In Nairobi, the conference facilities remained open for in-person meetings throughout the year. The relaxation of pandemic-related restrictions led to increased demand for meeting facilities, and requests for virtual meetings represented only 2 per cent of the total number of requests.

7. Overall, there was a 66 per cent year-on-year increase in the number of meetings held globally, as shown in table 1 and figure I, but the number remained 42 per cent lower than in 2019, before the pandemic.

Table 1  
Number of meetings held, global totals, 2017–2022

Number of meetings	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Global total	33 975	34 962	36 892	12 266	12 924	21 511

Figure I  
Meetings workload at the four main conference-servicing duty stations, 2017–2022

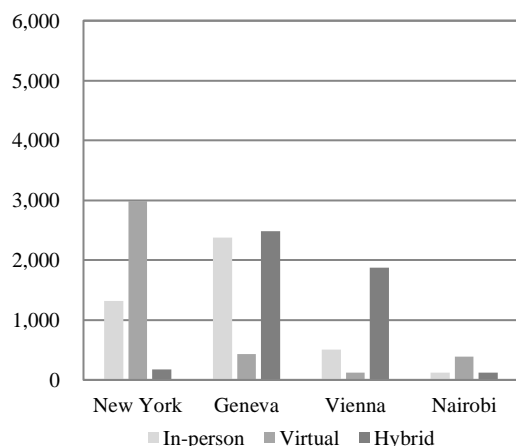


8. Non-calendar meetings accounted for 67 per cent of meetings in 2022, compared with 58 per cent in 2021, 67 per cent in 2020 and 82 per cent in 2019. The number of non-calendar meetings was 92 per cent higher than in 2021, while the number of calendar meetings was 30 per cent higher.

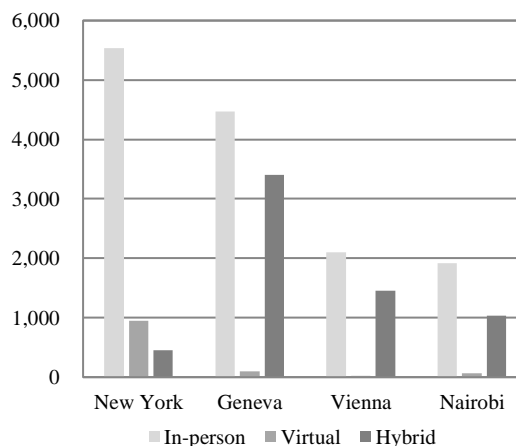
9. The number of in-person, virtual and hybrid meetings held at each duty station in 2021 and 2022 is shown in figure II. The proportion of meetings held in either virtual or hybrid mode fell to 35 per cent from 66 per cent in 2021, reflecting the return to in-person meetings. As a result of the lifting of the restrictions in place in 2021, the proportion of meetings supported with interpretation increased by 38 per cent compared with 2021, while the proportion of meetings arranged without interpretation increased by 83 per cent. In New York, 20 per cent of meetings were held in hybrid or virtual format, and in Geneva, 44 per cent of meetings serviced were held in either format. In Vienna, 41 per cent of meetings were held in hybrid or virtual mode. In Nairobi, technical and planning support for hybrid meetings hosted away from Nairobi increased in 2022 because of two new intergovernmental processes mandated by the United Nations Environment Assembly that required their official meetings to be conducted in hybrid format. Overall, in 2022 36 per cent of meetings serviced by Nairobi were held in hybrid or virtual mode.

Figure II  
**Formats of meetings held at the four main conference-servicing duty stations, 2021 and 2022**

**A. 2021**



**B. 2022**



10. On 5 May 2023, the World Health Organization declared an end to the public health emergency resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. In the intervening period of more than three years, the United Nations Secretariat provided virtual and hybrid meeting modalities for numerous meetings and events to ensure business continuity. This experience has garnered a wealth of lessons learned, foremost among which is the possibility of ensuring business continuity even during times of severe limitations on in-person meetings owing to the need to protect the safety of meeting participants and Secretariat staff.

11. At the same time, the intervening period has also highlighted challenges and areas requiring clarification and guidance from Member States.

12. When United Nations Headquarters and other duty stations closed in March 2020 owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, the complexities of transitioning conference-servicing operations to a virtual environment soon became evident.

13. The General Assembly, in its resolution [77/262](#), endorsed the observations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in its first report on the proposed programme budget for 2023 ([A/77/7](#)), in which the efforts of the Secretary-General to provide services to Member States and other clients during the pandemic were acknowledged.

14. As noted by the Advisory Committee, the provision of hybrid and virtual meetings requires a mandate from the General Assembly, along with approved legal parameters and technical requirements. In this connection, there may be a need to clarify how the rules of procedure would be applied in a formal meeting being held in hybrid or virtual format.

15. A related aspect is the requirement of universal access to the digital platforms to ensure equal participation by all Member States. In this regard, the question of authentication of participants has presented itself. According to the Office of Information and Communications Technology, when supporting Member States' meetings, it ensures that the required testing is conducted in advance, including verification and confirmation of access. This includes the platforms that underpin UniteVC, the United Nations videoconference system, Microsoft Teams, Webex, Zoom and the remote simultaneous interpretation platforms.

16. The virtual and hybrid meeting platforms provided by the Broadcast and Conference Support Section of the Office of Information and Communications Technology feature sophisticated (Advanced Encryption Standard 128-bit) encryption. The Section differentiates between open and closed meetings when selecting platforms to support Member States' meetings. UniteVC is used for both open and closed meetings but cannot be used for remote simultaneous interpretation. All other platforms are to be used only for open meetings.

17. In the wider context of universality of access being understood as access from anywhere by Member States and participants, however, multiple and varied practical, legal and technological challenges have arisen that are outside the scope of the Office's remit.

18. Another challenge has been that none of the existing remote simultaneous interpretation platforms is fully compliant with the standards set by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and fulfils all of the United Nations-specific requirements. After its deployment, the Secretariat had to limit the duration of remote simultaneous interpretation to two hours and the number of assignments for interpreters per week to five in order to address potential health hazards. This, however, is contrary to the original workload standard set by the General Assembly in 1991, according to which the workload of interpreters had been defined as seven (exceptionally eight) assignments per week of a three-hour duration.

19. Regardless of the technology involved or the standards that it meets, appropriate set-up by the remote participants is an essential prerequisite for successful remote servicing of meetings. Despite over three years of experience with remote participation and extensive communication campaigns to meeting participants, many problems persist as sound compression, connectivity issues and the use of ill-adapted equipment by remote participants continue to have a negative bearing on the quality of sound that is paramount for the interpretation of the proceedings. As a result, interpretation has been stopped, on occasion, during meetings owing to poor connectivity and set-up.

20. The equipment required to provide support to virtual and hybrid meetings was purchased with funding released under exceptional measures taken to ensure business continuity, in March 2020. Should hybrid and virtual meetings become an established part of the format of the programme of meetings, then operationally there would be human resources, technical and cost implications to the budget submission by multiple departments that comprise the conferencing ecosystem, as on-site, hybrid and fully virtual meetings with interpretation require different amounts of human resource allocation.

21. The overall possible implications would include different areas and involve the divisions of administration at the duty stations. To ensure resources for hybrid and virtual conferences, they would need to be mandated, and the related budgetary implications would need to be presented in accordance with the established budgetary procedure.

#### **A. Adoption of the draft calendar of conferences and meetings of the United Nations for 2023, requests for exceptions and intersessional departures**

22. The Committee on Conferences will review, at its substantive session in September 2023, a draft calendar of conferences and meetings of the United Nations for 2024 prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.172/2023/L.2) and transmit its recommendations to the General Assembly in its report for 2023 (A/78/32). Requests for exceptions to section I, paragraph 7, of Assembly resolution 40/243 to meet during

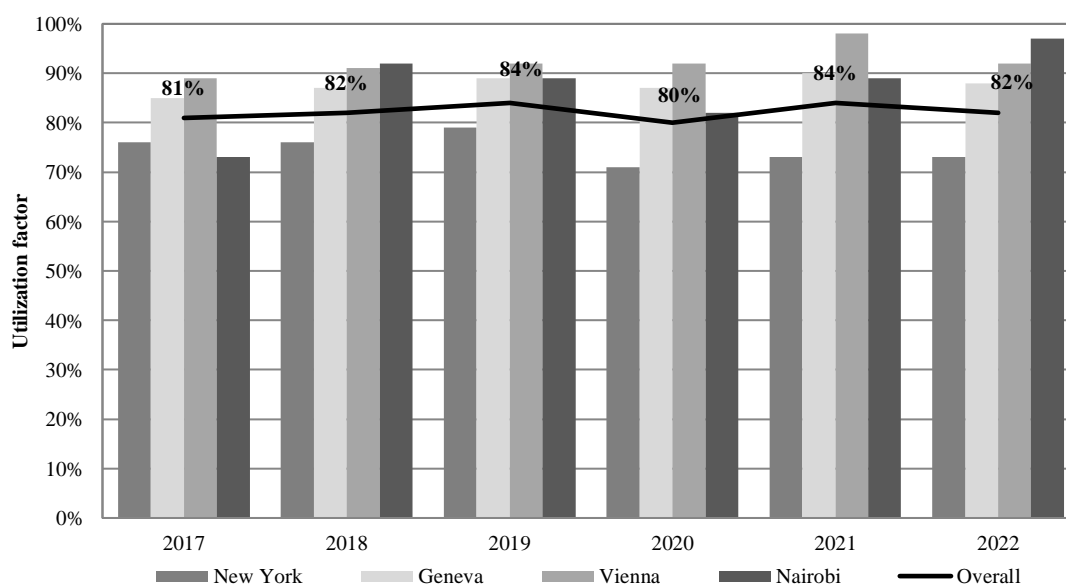
the main part of the seventy-eighth session of the Assembly had been received from 11 bodies at the time of preparing the present report. In accordance with established practice, the requests will be reviewed by the Committee, which will make a recommendation to the Assembly. The Committee approved 10 requests for intersessional departures in 2022.

## B. Utilization of conference-servicing resources by United Nations organs

23. All four duty stations continued efforts to optimize the interpretation utilization rate in accordance with the relevant provisions in resolutions of the General Assembly on the pattern of conferences, including by engaging with relevant intergovernmental and expert bodies. The overall utilization rate in 2022 was 82 per cent, 2 percentage points lower than in 2021, as shown in figure III.

Figure III

**Interpretation utilization factor of all calendar bodies, 2017–2022**

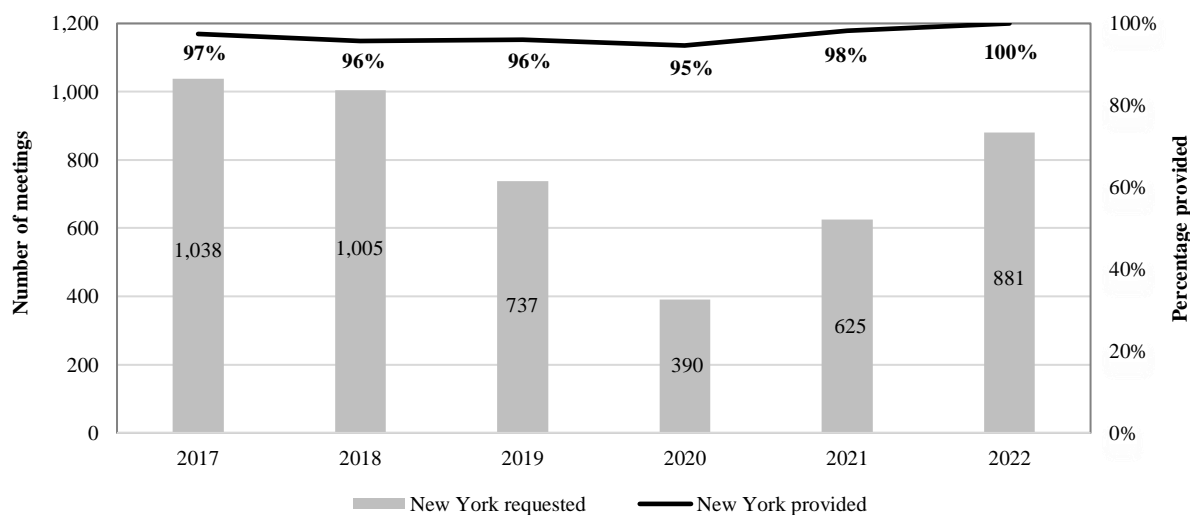


## C. Provision of interpretation services to bodies entitled to meet “as required”

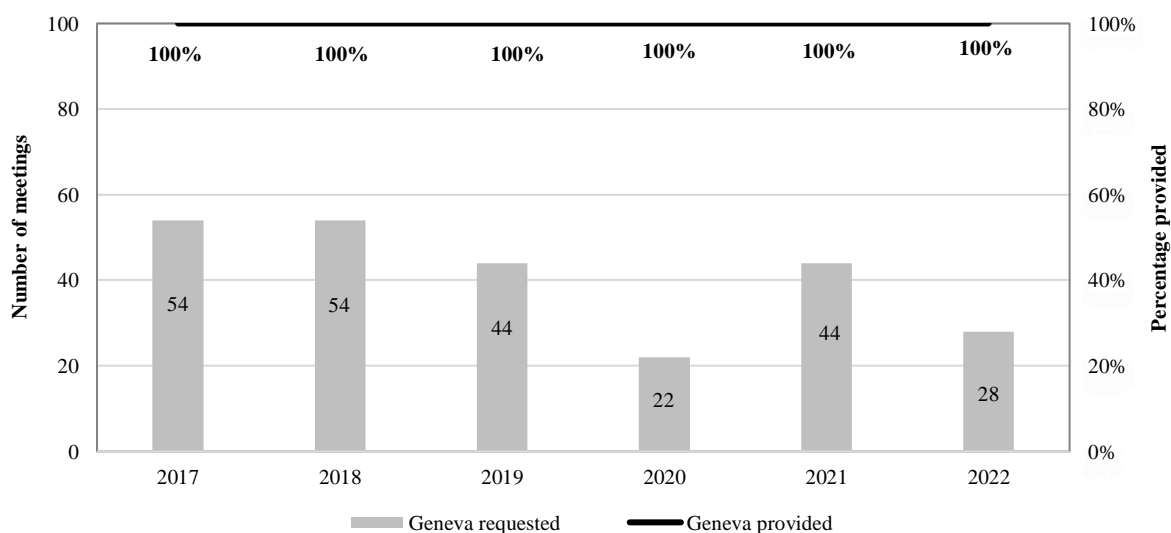
24. The provision of interpretation services to bodies entitled to meet “as required” is shown in figure IV for New York and Geneva. In New York, 100 per cent of such requests were met in 2022, an increase from 98 per cent in 2021. In Geneva, the only body entitled to meet “as required” is the Human Rights Council, and all its requests for interpretation services and meeting rooms were met. In 2022, Geneva provided interpretation for all programmed meetings in the languages requested by the bodies concerned, in line with the relevant General Assembly resolutions. There are no bodies entitled to meet “as required” in Vienna or Nairobi.

Figure IV  
Provision of interpretation services to bodies entitled to meet “as required”,  
2017–2022

**A. New York**



**B. Geneva**

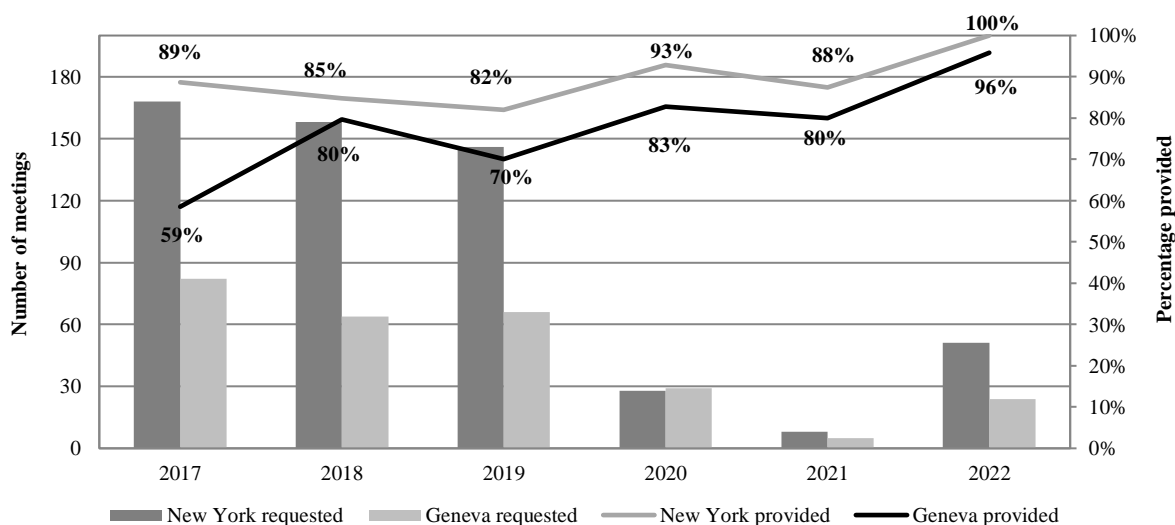


**D. Provision of conference services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States**

25. In New York, all requests for meetings made by regional and other major groupings of Member States in 2022 were accommodated, while in Geneva 96 per cent of such requests were met, as shown in figure V. Both New York and Geneva received more requests for meetings with interpretation services in 2022 than in 2021.

26. In Nairobi, a total of 15 requests for meetings with interpretation services were made in 2022, all of which were met. In Vienna, there were no such requests in 2022.

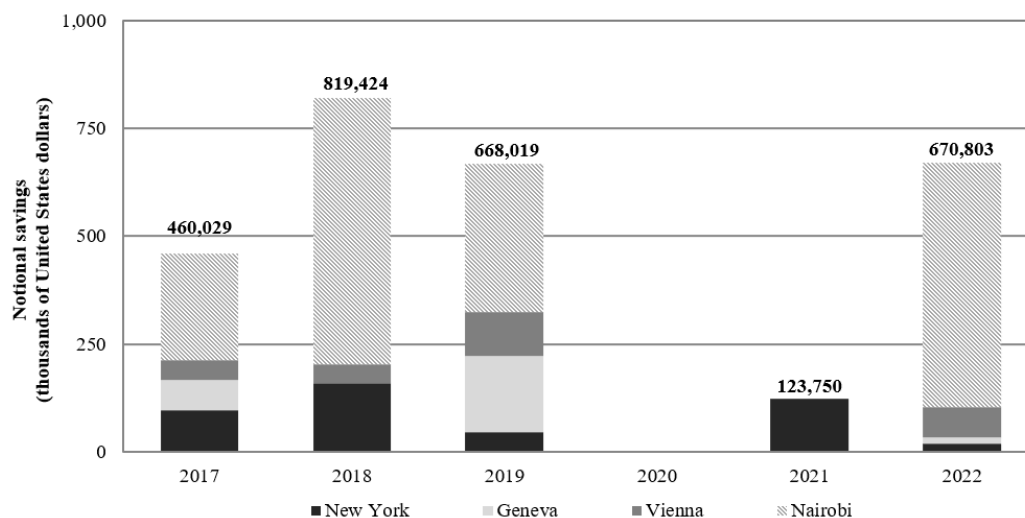
Figure V  
Provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States in New York and Geneva, 2017–2022



## E. Meetings held away from established headquarters

27. As shown in figure VI, notional savings generated by the integrated management approach, which entails identifying available staff from various duty stations and locations based on the lowest travel costs, increased notably in 2022, reflecting the global resumption of meetings and conferences. Most of the savings reflect the meetings serviced away from headquarters by the United Nations Office at Nairobi. In Vienna, when pandemic-related travel restrictions eased, arrangements were made for the annual meetings of the five subsidiary bodies of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs to be held away from Vienna, with some participants attending remotely.

Figure VI  
Notional savings from shared services of meetings held away from established headquarters, 2017–2022





## F. Innovations in meetings services in 2022

28. A mobile-ready multilingual calendar website ([www.un.org/calendar/en](http://www.un.org/calendar/en)) providing detailed and up-to-date information to Member States, other stakeholders and the general public on meetings and conferences of the United Nations being held throughout the world was launched in September 2022 to replace the previous English-only website.

29. In response to Member States' expectations, the Department has invested substantially in e-deleGATE, which now provides digital access through a single platform to meeting-related services anytime and anywhere for approximately 50 intergovernmental bodies. These services include remote inscription on lists of speakers and the submission and sponsorship of proposals. Work also continued on the expansion of functional linkages between the e-deleGATE portal and gDoc and the Dag Hammarskjöld Library resources. As a result of these innovations, the lists of resolutions available on the United Nations website are now updated more quickly. For the first time, live lists of speakers were shared through committee web pages during the general debate at the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly, thus facilitating access from anywhere. Work is under way to leverage lists of speakers to generate other records kept by technical secretariats and to share the live lists through e-deleGATE.

30. In Geneva, the generation of transcripts of meeting recordings using the fully automated speech-to-text system, in partnership with the World Intellectual Property Organization, was scaled up to process approximately 4,500 hours of meeting recordings, providing automatic transcripts for most public calendar meetings and covering over 50 bodies in 2022. The potential for harnessing automated speech-to-text at United Nations Headquarters is currently being explored.

31. Following the launch in 2021 of the English version of the new United Nations Web TV website ([webtv.un.org](http://webtv.un.org)), the Department of Global Communications launched the versions in the other five official languages in 2022. The Department provided live multilingual streaming coverage of 3,535 United Nations meetings and events, held in virtual, hybrid or in-person formats in various locations, including New York, Geneva, The Hague and Rome. A total of 12,936 new webcast recordings were made available, bringing the total number of webcast videos available for on-demand access by global audiences to 124,705. Archived webcasts with searchable metadata in all six official languages are available for open, numbered General Assembly, Security Council and Economic and Social Council meetings held from January 2022 onward, when the Department received funds to cover the cost of recruiting one staff member per language.

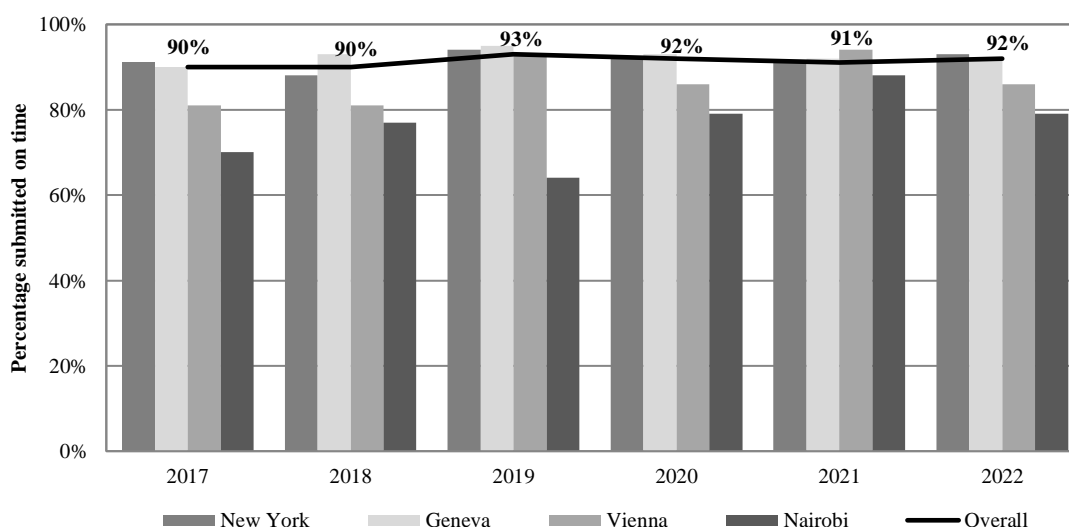
32. In Geneva and Vienna, formal and informal meetings are digitally recorded upon request by the client. In 2022, Geneva produced digital recordings of 2,836 meetings, or 47 per cent of the total meeting workload. In Vienna, three intergovernmental bodies continued to receive digital recordings as a replacement for unedited transcripts; 138 meetings of those bodies were digitally recorded in 2022. In addition, the United Nations Information Service in Vienna provided webcasts of seven events. In Nairobi, the two calendar intergovernmental bodies headquartered there receive digital recordings of their official meetings, and other non-calendar bodies are provided with digital recordings if requested. A total of 65 digital recordings were provided in 2022. In New York, all open formal meetings are recorded by default in the media asset management system.

### III. Documents management

#### A. Timely submission, processing and issuance of documents

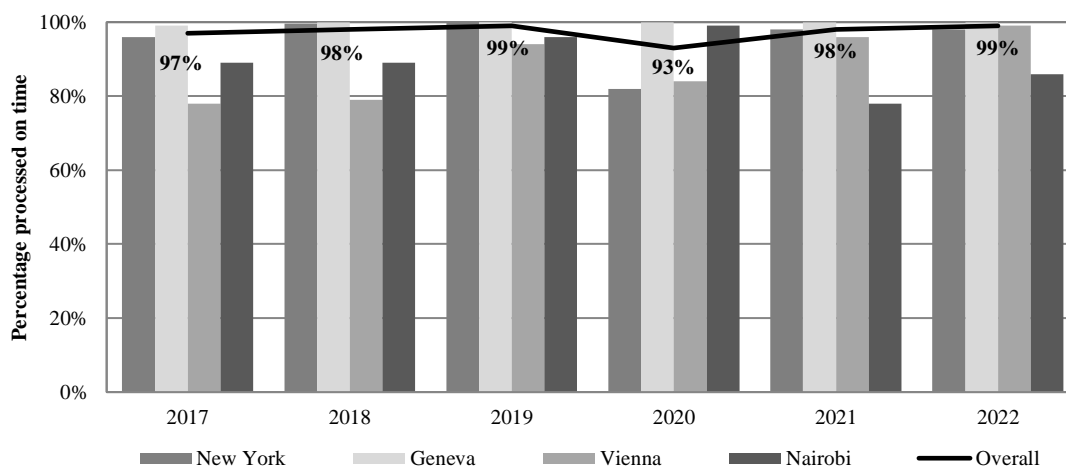
33. Overall compliance by author departments with the deadlines for submitting slotted documents for processing (editing, translation and formatting) increased from 91 per cent to 92 per cent (see figure VII). The proposed programme budget for each department and entity continued to include information on timely submission to the Department of the parliamentary documentation needed for the smooth and effective conduct of meetings of intergovernmental and expert bodies, so as to ensure its timely availability in all six official languages.

Figure VII  
Timely submission of slotted documents, 2017–2022



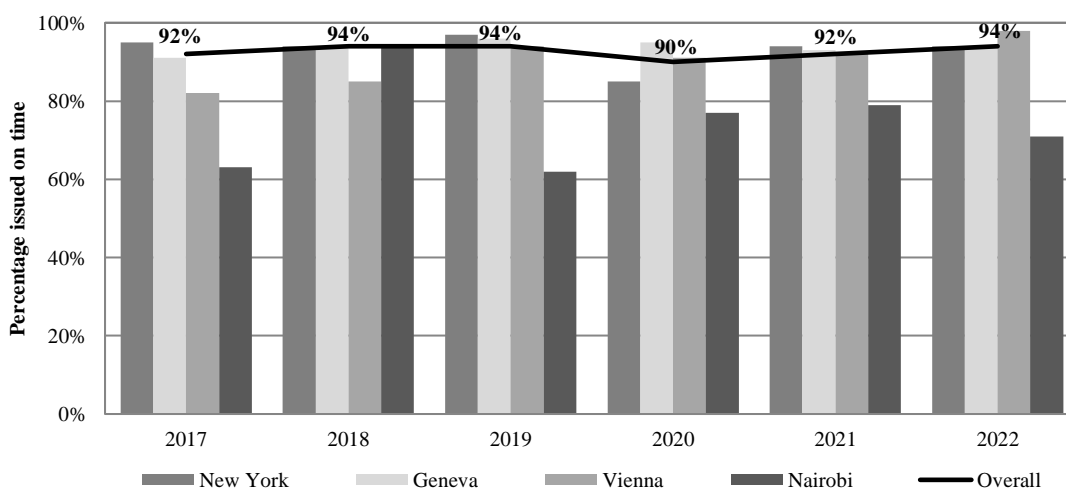
34. During the year, across the four duty stations, 99 per cent of the documents (3,074 of a total of 3,117) submitted on time and within word limits were processed in a timely manner, a slight increase from 98 per cent in 2021, as shown in figure VIII. The rates increased in Vienna and Nairobi and remained unchanged in Geneva and New York. In New York, the interdepartmental task force on documentation convened by the Assistant Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management continued efforts to ensure compliance with slot dates to the extent possible. Proactive communication with author departments minimized delays and facilitated the optimization of capacity planning. The budget-related reports for the Fifth Committee were accorded priority so as to be processed and issued as quickly as possible. An indicator on documentation timeliness and volume was included in the senior managers' compacts with the Secretary-General for 2022.

Figure VIII  
Timely processing of slotted documents, 2017–2022



35. Overall compliance with issuance deadlines rose from 92 per cent in 2021 to 94 per cent in 2022 (see figure IX). Specifically, year on year, timely issuance increased from 92 per cent to 98 per cent in Vienna, owing to the prioritization of parliamentary documents that were submitted on time and within word limits, and from 93 per cent to 94 per cent in Geneva. New York was able to maintain timely issuance at 94 per cent, the same rate as in 2021. Timely issuance in Nairobi decreased from 79 per cent to 71 per cent, owing largely to departmental corrections being received while documents were in process. Furthermore, some language units in Nairobi continued to experience a vacancy rate of 33 per cent for most of the year, which had a serious impact on processing capacity.

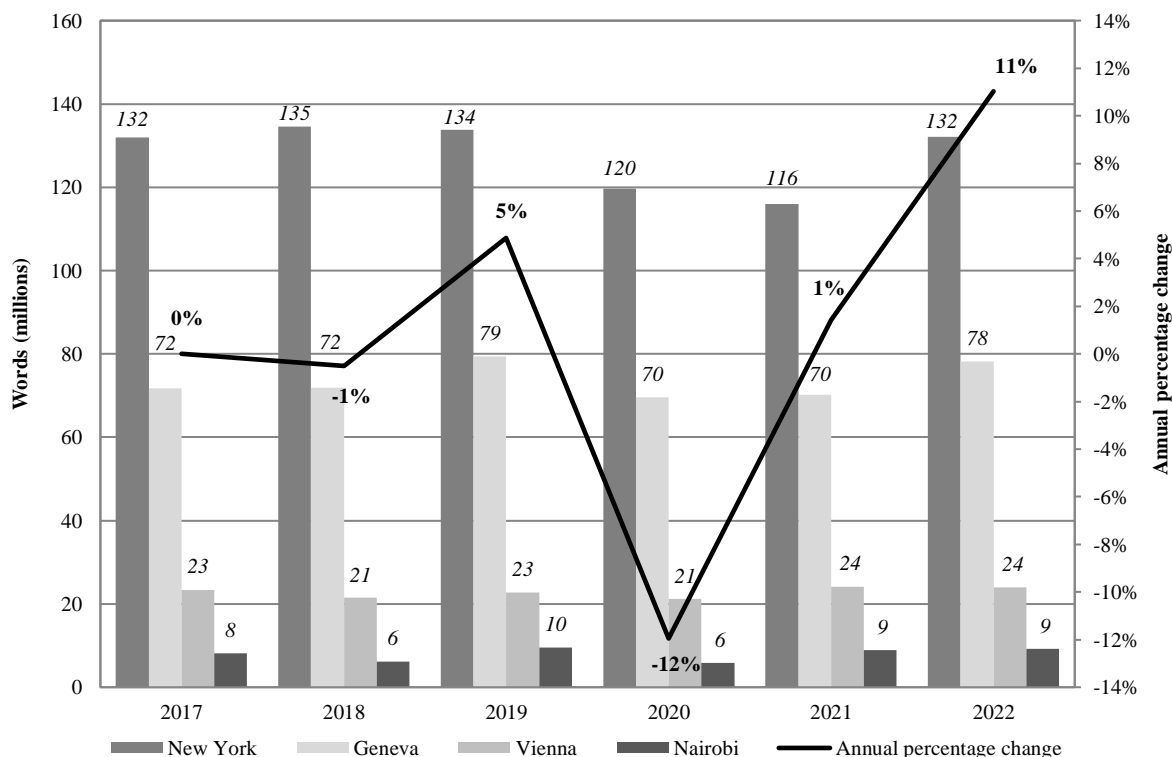
Figure IX  
Timely issuance of slotted documents, 2017–2022



## B. Control and limitation of documentation

36. The number of words submitted globally for translation increased to just over 243 million in 2022, from 219 million in 2021, representing an 11 per cent year-on-year increase, as shown in figure X.

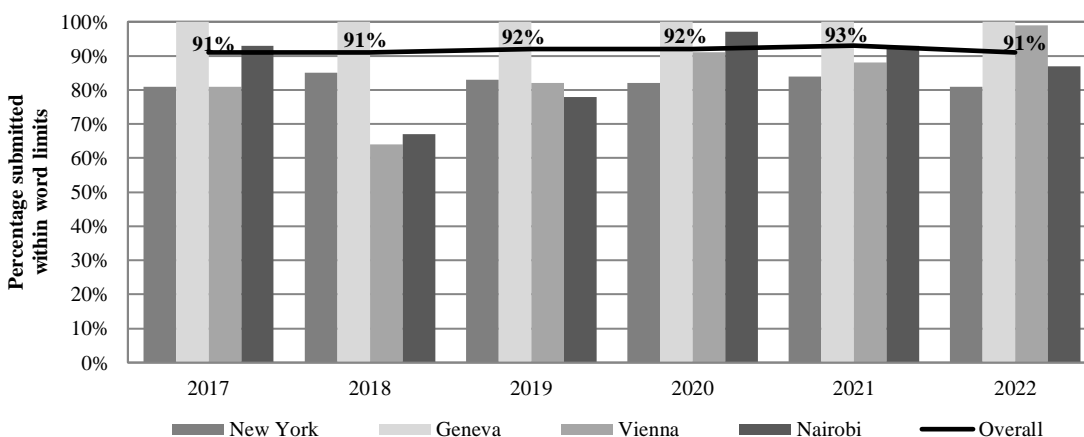
Figure X  
Translation workload, 2017–2022



37. The proportion of documents submitted for processing within agreed word limits decreased slightly, from 93 per cent to 91 per cent (see figure XI). In New York, the 2022 translation workload was just over 132 million words, compared with 116 million in 2021. The percentage of slotted documents that complied with the agreed word limits decreased from 84 per cent in 2021 to 81 per cent in 2022 because of requests received from Member States to include additional analyses and information. The number of waiver requests submitted for documents that exceeded the word limit, to accommodate Member State input, decreased slightly, from 20 in 2021 to 18 in 2022, representing 57,000 words that had to be processed in addition to the planned workload. Consultations continued with author departments and offices to explore alternative options to ensure that Secretariat reports were kept within the mandated word limits.

38. Since 2012, Geneva has been strictly implementing the word limits for all slotted documents and monitoring submissions from the human rights treaty bodies for compliance with the word limits and the number of languages for translation, in accordance with General Assembly resolution [68/268](#). No waivers were granted in 2022. In Vienna, the proportion of documents that complied with the word limits reached 99 per cent as a result of proactive management of submissions, compared with 88 per cent in 2021. In Nairobi it was 87 per cent, compared with 93 per cent in 2021, since the length of submissions by non-calendar bodies funded through extrabudgetary resources is not subject to controls and fluctuates from year to year. Earlier-than-usual slot dates were negotiated for budgetary and technical or legal documents that exceeded the mandated word limits.

Figure XI  
Documents submitted for processing in line with the mandated or agreed word limits, 2017–2022



### C. Productivity

39. The throughput productivity of the translation services, that is, the total number of words processed divided by the staff days spent translating them, for 2018–2022 is shown in table 2. It should be noted that, owing to further refinement of the methodology applicable to New York, the 2021 and 2022 figures, unlike previous years, do not include the additional workload generated by parallel processing. Parallel processing is the practice of simultaneously editing and translating documents in order to minimize processing time and is used in New York because of time pressure and limited editorial capacity. If editorial changes were included, throughput productivity for New York in 2022 would be 7.6 pages per staff member per day rather than the 6.3 pages shown in table 2. It should also be noted that the 2022 figures for New York and Nairobi do not include English translation because of the different nature of the work performed by staff in the English Translation and Editorial Service in New York and the English Language Unit in Nairobi.

Table 2  
Throughput productivity of the translation services, 2018–2022  
(Pages per day)

Duty station	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
New York	6.1	6.2	6.6	6.1 <sup>a</sup>	6.3 <sup>a,b</sup>
Geneva	5.3	5.5	5.8	6.4	6.6
Vienna	5.4	5.9	6.7	7.5	7.2
Nairobi	4.9	5.8	5.5	6.7	6.9 <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> If editorial changes were included, as in previous years up to 2020, throughput productivity for New York in 2021 and 2022 would be 7.4 pages and 7.6 pages per staff member per day, respectively.

<sup>b</sup> Excluding English translation (see para. 39).

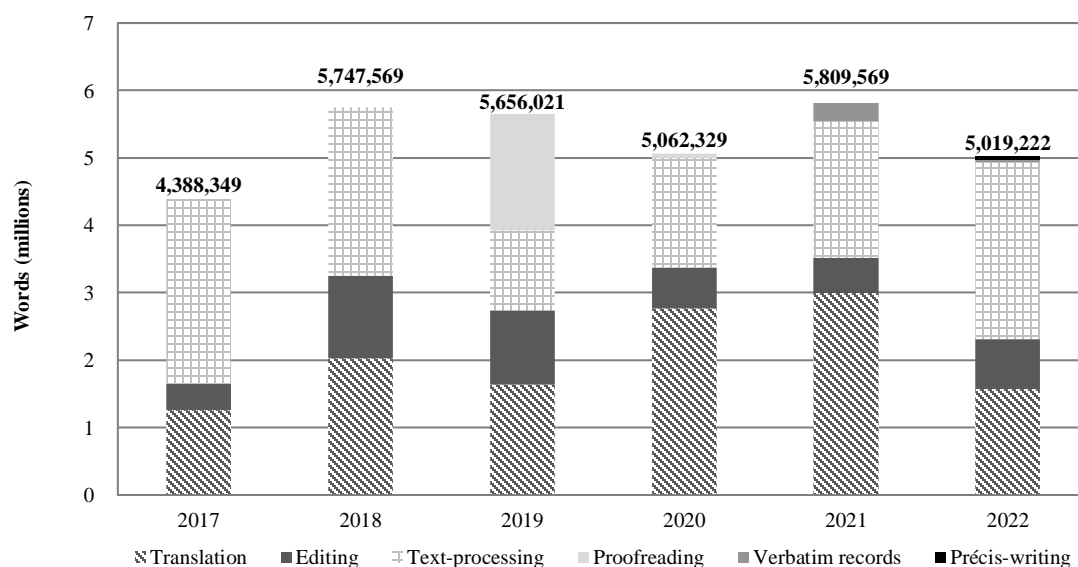
### D. Workload-sharing

40. The volume of workload shared among the duty stations for 2017–2022 is shown in figure XII. A portion of the shared workload processed by Geneva included

translation work for the Verbatim Reporting Service in New York, labelled as “verbatim records” in figure XII. In 2022, the shared workload for the first time included précis-writing, which corresponded to the contribution of Geneva to the production of summary records of five Sixth Committee meetings held in New York. The global evaluation of workload-sharing among documentation services conducted by the Secretariat in 2022 resulted in a number of action points, including the development of a global capacity dashboard in gDoc, in order to fully utilize internal capacity across duty stations and thereby ensure cost-effectiveness by minimizing the use of temporary and contractual assistance.

Figure XII

### Workload-sharing among duty stations, 2017–2022, in words and by type

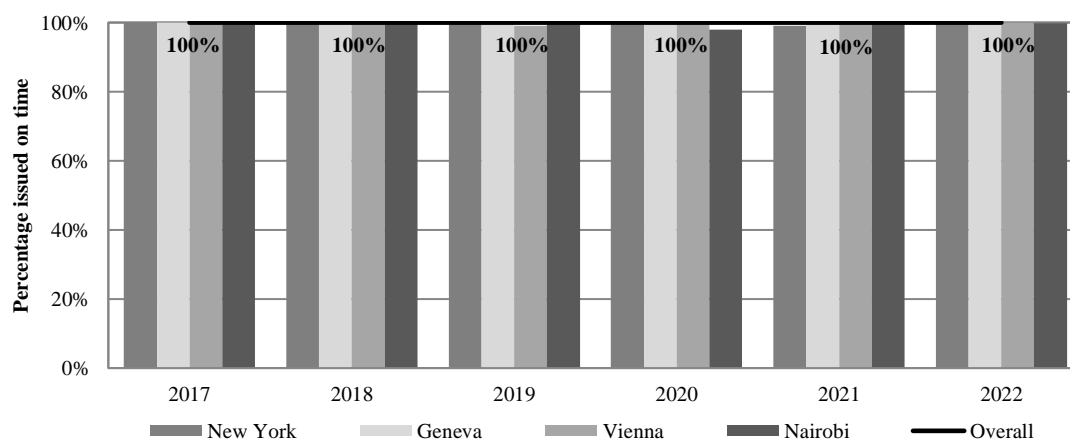


## E. Simultaneous issuance of documents

41. One of the pillars of multilingualism is the simultaneous issuance of documents in the mandated official languages. Overall, full compliance with this mandate was achieved in 2022, as shown in figure XIII.

Figure XIII

### Compliance with the simultaneous issuance requirements, 2017–2022



### **Issuance of verbatim and summary records**

42. The Verbatim Reporting Service initiated a plan to eliminate the backlog of verbatim records of the General Assembly. Some aspects of the plan are already being implemented, including upgrading to self-revision status those verbatim reporters, among both permanent and temporary staff, with a proven track record of quality and reliability, so as to alleviate the bottleneck caused by insufficient revision capacity. Other measures, such as increased use of contractual services, including translation companies where available, and continued efforts to use state-of-the-art language technologies, will be implemented gradually.

43. A total of 309 summary records were issued in New York in 2022, an increase from 130 in 2021, while the number issued in Geneva rose from 401 in 2021 to 576 in 2022.

## **F. Digitization and uploading of important older United Nations documents**

44. In accordance with General Assembly resolution [52/214](#), in which the Assembly requested the completion of digitization of all important older United Nations documents in all six official languages, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library introduced an in-house digitization programme in 1998. As a result, 555,000 documents (some 7 million pages) and 3,000 United Nations maps have been digitized to date. The Department of Global Communications expresses its gratitude to the Government of Qatar for its donation to the programme, which secured the purchase of a robotic scanner that has increased the digitization outputs.

45. The Department of Global Communications presented to the Committee on Information at its forty-third session a new mass digitization and preservation project proposal prepared by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library. The project would involve the preservation of 1 million documents issued during the period from 1946 to 1993 that are currently in deteriorating condition. The business case for the project includes outsourcing of the digitization and basic metadata creation to enable the preservation of the documents in the United Nations Digital Library and the Official Document System, and the upgrading of the digital platform of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library in line with current practices and international standards. A sum of \$10 million was requested to fund the project over a five-year period. The Department of Global Communications presented the business case and funding request to interested Member States and three foundations. It will continue to present the proposal to as many stakeholders as possible until a funding opportunity is identified.

## **G. New developments in documents management and processing in 2022**

46. An updated version of gDoc, the global system for managing the processing of multilingual documentation in support of the intergovernmental process, was launched at the four duty stations in 2022, facilitating management of the documentation workload in a globally coordinated and harmonized manner. The system is closely integrated with the eLUNa computer-assisted translation tool, and new integration points with gData and e-deleGATE were also developed in 2022. A new feature was added to eLUNa to enable the machine translation of a full document prior to further review, and the automated quality assurance function was enhanced.

47. In 2022, the United Nations Terminology Database (UNTERM) continued to support the provision of high-quality language services and the use of official terminology across the United Nations. The portal was redesigned in all six official

languages and enhanced with multilingual accessibility features. New functions highlight terminology collections in different areas of specialization managed by different entities, including the regional commissions and United Nations system organizations.

48. In 2022, the Department continued the production of machine-readable documents, providing new data visualization services and enabling the automated production of the volumes of General Assembly and Economic and Social Council resolutions and decisions, which were published several months earlier than usual. The functionality was expanded to include Assembly decisions, which are now displayed in multilingual interactive reports prior to publication. Security Council resolutions and presidential statements continued to be converted into machine-readable format to populate the iSCAD+ database.

## IV. Staffing

### A. Vacancies

49. The vacancy rates by duty station in key occupational groups as at 31 December 2022 are presented in table 3. Language services continued to fill vacancies as expeditiously as possible while maintaining the required vacancy rate. Efforts to fill vacancies in Nairobi continued, resulting in the recruitment of one interpreter in early 2023. All languages are treated equally in terms of human resources, while fully respecting the specificities of the workload of each language and occupational group.

Table 3

#### Vacancy rates in key occupational groups as at 31 December 2022

(Posts)

	<i>New York</i>		<i>Geneva</i>		<i>Vienna</i>		<i>Nairobi</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Interpretation services	6	5	5	5	2	7 <sup>a</sup>	4	21
Translation services	66	20	19	11	4	9	4	27
Text-processing services	20	17	15	21	4	11	2	11 <sup>b</sup>
Editing services	3	13	3	14	1	17	2	40 <sup>c</sup>
Verbatim Reporting Service	8	16	—	—	—	—	—	—

<sup>a</sup> Including one Professional post (Chief, Interpretation Section) that was not included in the figures for previous years.

<sup>b</sup> Including 19 General Service posts (text-processing): 6 established posts (1 vacant) and 13 extrabudgetary posts (1 vacant).

<sup>c</sup> Including five Professional posts (editing) that were reported under translation services in previous years.

### B. Recruitment

50. Competitive examinations for language positions are scheduled in accordance with the succession planning needs of the language services. Five competitive examinations were organized in 2022: for Arabic and Chinese interpreters and for English interpreters with Russian, as well as for Arabic translators, editors and verbatim reporters and English translator/précis-writers, editors, verbatim reporters and English linguists. Three of the examinations were concluded in 2022, adding 89 candidates to the language- and function-specific rosters of language professionals eligible for recruitment against posts.



51. Active use has been made of the global roster of language professionals to supplement the workforce with temporary assistance at times of peak workload. Efforts are being made to offer temporary appointments to talented junior professionals from underrepresented regions. Five examinations for placement on the global roster of language professionals deemed suitable for employment by the Department on a temporary or per-assignment basis were organized in 2022.

52. All recruitment examinations for language professionals are conducted online, enabling qualified candidates anywhere in the world to participate without incurring travel expenses. Targeted outreach campaigns aimed at a wide range of stakeholders were conducted in 2022 to explain the application process and requirements and to encourage applications from suitable candidates from all regions.

### **C. Outreach to potential applicants**

53. Approximately 70 per cent of the total staff time spent on outreach activities involved assisting current partner and other universities. Most outreach activities were conducted online in 2022, in line with changes in the training methods used by universities since the pandemic. The Department continued to use social media in the six official languages in support of its outreach programme. By the end of 2022, it had more than 50,000 followers or subscribers on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube combined, an increase of 12 per cent compared with 2021, with the largest increase in the number of followers on YouTube, which was 41 per cent higher than in 2021.

54. The Secretariat continued its efforts to reach out to language professionals from Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean in particular. Overall, in 2022, 59 per cent of the estimated staff time spent on outreach at the four duty stations was targeted at language professionals from these two regions. Special efforts were made to increase diversity among applicants for the competitive examinations for English, French and Spanish interpreters to be held in 2023. Information sessions on the application procedure for potential candidates were widely promoted, including through social media, and partner universities in the target regions hosted information sessions with United Nations interpreters for their students and graduates. Outreach materials were shared with relevant partner universities, alumni associations, professional organizations and United Nations information centres and country teams, as well as member institutions of the United Nations Academic Impact initiative. Examinations were publicized through the Department's website and social media channels and through announcements made to permanent missions and observer missions in New York. In preparation for the examination for placement on the global roster for French interpreters organized in 2022 and the competitive examination for French interpreters, a traineeship involving staff from all four duty stations was offered in the last quarter of 2022 to 17 participants, 7 of whom were African nationals.

55. With the aim of training potential examination candidates from Latin America and the Caribbean, 10 interpreters from the Spanish interpretation sections at the four duty stations attended a training-of-trainers course offered by a partner university. Following the course, the Organization hosted a traineeship for 20 participants from the region, 10 of whom were subsequently selected for one-on-one coaching sessions. An outreach presentation was arranged for students at the University of the West Indies prior to the competitive examination for English translator/précis-writers, editors, verbatim reporters and English linguists.

56. The Arabic interpretation sections in New York and Geneva jointly organized a series of webinars to provide potential candidates with information about the requirements for recruitment as an interpreter at the United Nations. The webinars were well attended, with many participants located in Africa. The Arabic

Interpretation Section in New York also offered a one-on-one mentoring programme over a six-month period ahead of the competitive examination organized in 2022. Of the 16 participants in the programme, 7 were from Africa, of whom 5 passed the examination. Overall, 19 candidates passed the examination, 10 of whom were African nationals.

57. At the International Annual Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications in 2022, it was noted that expressions of interest were still being sought from member organizations based in Africa to lead a task force that would work on a road map for the continuation of the Pan-African Masters Consortium in Interpretation and Translation.

58. In 2022, the number of interns hosted by language services was still below pre-pandemic levels. Nonetheless, the number increased to 28, from 21 in 2021. Of those, 57 per cent were current students or recent graduates of partner universities. Efforts aimed at recruiting interns from Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean also continued despite the challenges of the pandemic: 28.6 per cent of all interns hosted by United Nations language services in 2022 were nationals of Africa or Latin America and the Caribbean, the same proportion as in 2021. In addition to internships, United Nations language services continued to offer remote practicums to students enrolled in universities that have signed a remote practicum agreement with the Organization.

## V. Improvements in language services and quality

59. Workload standards and quality requirements apply equally to all staff and in all official languages. The Secretariat's translation services continued to implement the new workload standard of 5.8 pages per day for translation approved by the General Assembly in its resolution [75/252](#), an increase from the standard of 5 pages per day in effect since 1999. The new standard for self-revised translation is 6.4 pages per day, in accordance with the ratio of pages of translation to pages of self-revision previously applied, reflecting the fact that self-revision is performed by more experienced staff. The workload standard for revision was maintained at 12 pages per day to account for the increased time that revisers are now required to spend on providing formal feedback to translators to support them on their path to self-revision. Since self-revision involves only one staff member rather than two, it is more cost-effective than the process of translation plus revision and accelerates the translation process, thereby contributing to the Department's mandate on timely delivery of documentation. The new workload standards are embedded in gDoc so that the output delivered by each staff member can be calculated automatically.

60. In 2021, the Department completed a pilot to assess the quantity of reprise text (i.e. text previously translated in other documents) in the official documentation that it produces. In 2022, the data collected were analysed by an ad hoc task force created in the framework of the International Annual Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications to assess the effort of revising reprise text identified by eLUNa. This led to the adoption of a new definition of reprise. Adjusting productivity expectations or reducing credit according to the quantity of reprise is standard practice in the translation industry; nonetheless, the reduction of credit was temporarily halted for language staff in 2021 and 2022 to facilitate the implementation of the new workload standards, taking into account the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on staff. The current plan is to reinstate the reduction of credit from mid-2023 onward. In addition to identifying all previously translated segments, eLUNa gives translators access to the best commercial machine translation systems

on the market, which are identified by translators in blind tests conducted by the Procurement Division.

61. To support translators in achieving the new workload standards while producing work of the highest quality, new learning and continuous development programmes were established in New York and Geneva, where about 90 per cent of the Department's translators, revisers and editors work. The programmes will also deliver activities to staff in Vienna and Nairobi. In New York, many activities have already been organized, including training sessions and presentations by author departments. In addition, tools are being developed to ensure the continuous professional development of language staff in a context of continuous technological change.

62. The competitive examinations for language positions ensure the recruitment of language professionals of the highest calibre. New translation recruits are provided with structured onboarding training to instil the high standards of quality expected at the United Nations. All translators are provided with ongoing training to update their knowledge and skills, including through the Department's self-paced online training tool and the Athena knowledge hub, which contains translation-related guidelines and other information on a variety of subjects.

63. A new translation quality management framework developed by all four duty stations was adopted in November 2022. In New York, a translation quality evaluation tool is used to systematically rate the quality of work performed by in-house translators, on the basis of agreed criteria, and to provide feedback to support their progress towards self-revision. A separate tool is used to evaluate the quality of text-processing work on the basis of common standards and to provide feedback to staff on their performance. The data collected through the tools are used to inform managerial decisions on training, coaching, mentoring and performance management and to support the professional development of translators and text-processing staff.

64. In order to ensure the highest possible quality of contractual translation, translation agencies are selected through rigorous bidding exercises, while individual contractors must be included in the global roster of language professionals eligible for contractual or temporary work. The global roster was established through strict review processes involving all duty stations; new additions are limited to professionals who pass the competitive examinations for language positions, former language staff with satisfactory performance records and successful candidates in the competitive selection processes advertised through Inspira specifically for placement on the roster. All contractual work is subject to systematic quality control and evaluation by in-house staff prior to issuance in order to ensure that it complies with the Organization's high quality standards. A new standard operating procedure on quality management of contractual self-revised translation, for implementation at all duty stations, was developed in 2022.

65. Both in-house staff and contractors systematically use eLUNa, which provides easy access to UNTERM and includes search features that allow for the retrieval of text from the eLUNa collection of documents translated at the main duty stations and regional commissions. This helps to ensure the quality and consistency of translation. UNTERM is constantly updated: in 2022, a total of 3,469 multilingual terminology records were created and 110,270 records were edited across the four duty stations, regional commissions and specialized agencies, reflecting the latest linguistic norms and terminology in the official languages.

66. In interpretation, as in translation and the Verbatim Reporting Service, the highest standards of quality are ensured through rigorous recruitment processes. In 2022, the interpretation services at all four duty stations provided remote coaching and training programmes to students at universities that have signed a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations. In addition, on an exceptional basis, a

number of talented junior interpreters on the global roster were offered 11-month appointments, with mentoring, one-on-one training and performance monitoring once they were on board. The quality of interpretation by both in-house and external staff is maintained through regular evaluation, continuous feedback and other measures such as spot checks, peer-to-peer evaluation and self-assessment. A variety of training opportunities are provided to enable both in-house and external staff to enhance their technical skills and broaden their knowledge of relevant subject matter.

67. To monitor the level of satisfaction of Member States with the quality of the conference services, the Secretariat collects feedback through annual informational meetings held at the four duty stations, ad hoc surveys and the global e-survey that is available throughout the year in the official languages. There were 113 responses to the global survey, compared with 141 in 2021, with 82 per cent of respondents rating the conference services provided as either “good” or “very good” in 2022, a decrease from 89 per cent in 2021. The 12 respondents to a survey of Bureau members of the Main Committees in New York rated the overall quality of the assistance provided by secretariats as “good” or “very good”. Meanwhile 52 compliments and 5 complaints were received through the feedback database maintained independently from the e-survey. Immediate action was taken to address the complaints.

68. In Geneva, 89 per cent of respondents to a local survey rated conference services there as “good” or “very good” overall in 2022. In addition, 18 compliments and 2 complaints pertaining to the quality of services at meetings held that year were received. In Vienna, the Conference Management Service received 68 letters of appreciation from clients in 2022. Nairobi regularly conducts local surveys following non-calendar meetings, based on the global survey but with additional questions from the relevant secretariats, and 89 per cent of surveyed delegates rated the conference services provided as excellent, good or satisfactory.

69. The informational meetings with delegations organized by the four conference-servicing duty stations in 2022 focused on a variety of topics, including ways to improve documentation operations and the importance of meeting participants sharing statements in a timely manner and speaking at a normal speed, and of having the right equipment for remote participation in meetings. Representatives of Member States expressed their appreciation for the work of the meetings and documentation services.

## VI. Accessibility

70. In New York, in line with the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy and the relevant recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit, the Department continued to collaborate with other departments and offices to respond to the accessibility needs of delegates and other users of conference services and to raise awareness of accessibility issues. The Accessibility Centre continued to provide accessible seating, assistive devices and Braille printing on request. Sign language interpretation, accessible parliamentary documentation and assistance in meeting rooms were also provided, and relevant in-house information technology systems were enhanced. The Department, jointly with the President of the General Assembly, convened a training session on accessibility and sensitivity awareness tailored for Secretariat staff and delegates of Member States and observers that focused on enhancing awareness of the human dimension of inclusion and highlighted good practices, etiquette and protocols. In 2022, 47 meetings were serviced with remote sign language interpretation, a slight decrease from 55 in 2021. These included meetings of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the high-level political forum on sustainable development and the

Commission on the Status of Women, as well as a number of events during the high-level week of the General Assembly. Live captioning was provided for 162 meetings, compared with 113 in 2021.

71. In Geneva, 96 meetings were provided with sign language interpretation, a significant increase from 62 in 2021, and 191 meetings were provided with live captioning, compared with 113 in 2021. Among the meetings provided with both sign language interpretation and live captioning were the sessions of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, panels of the Human Rights Council and meetings of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Geneva also provided accessibility services at the seventh session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, held in Bali, Indonesia, in May 2022, during which 39 meetings were provided with captioning in English and 36 meetings with sign language interpretation. In 2022, Geneva met its target of providing accessibility services to 100 per cent of meetings for which such services were mandated. It also conducted various initiatives in line with the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy.

72. In Vienna, a digital magnifier for persons with vision impairment was introduced in 2022, and three portable audio systems were made available for persons with hearing impairment. In addition, mobility aids were purchased for use by conference participants and other visitors to the Vienna International Centre. In conjunction with the International Annual Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications, Vienna coordinated the drafting of guidelines for writing alternative text (“alt text”) descriptions of figures and tables. Work continues in this area to refine workflows and develop training for content creators. In late 2022, information totems were installed throughout the Vienna International Centre with a touchscreen interface that can be accessed by wheelchair users.

73. Nairobi endeavours to provide meetings with sign language interpretation whenever requested. Accessibility is being taken into account in the renovation of the conference facilities that is currently under way.

## VII. Facilities

74. In his fourth report on addressing the deteriorating conditions and limited capacity of the conference services facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi ([A/77/367](#) and [A/77/367/Corr.1](#)), submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [76/246](#), the Secretary-General provided an update on additional work undertaken in 2022 and presented refined options A and B, designed to accommodate 7,000 and 9,000 in-person conference participants, respectively, while maintaining that refined option B was recommended. The report presented a revised maximum overall cost for option A of \$228.6 million at current rates, a reduction of \$14.0 million, or 5.8 per cent, compared with the cost reported in the previous report ([A/76/400](#)), and a revised maximum overall cost for option B of \$265.6 million at current rates, a reduction of \$13.4 million, or 4.8 per cent, compared with the cost reported in document [A/76/400](#). The timeline for the project has been extended by nine months and is now scheduled for substantial completion in 2029, contingent upon the authorization by the Assembly to start the design phase of the project at the beginning of 2023.

75. In section VIII of its resolution [77/263](#), the General Assembly decided to commission the design work for the conference services facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, on the basis of option B, without prejudice to any future decisions regarding the construction phase of the project. It also decided to establish a multi-year construction in-progress account for the conference services facilities project at the Office and appropriated an amount of \$6,187,700 for the project in 2023, comprising \$2,298,400 under section 29G, Administration, Nairobi, and

\$3,889,300 under section 33, Construction, alteration, improvement and major maintenance, of the programme budget for 2023.

## **VIII. Sustainability**

76. The Department continues to offer on-demand printing of official documents and publications. The number of page impressions of parliamentary documentation has decreased dramatically over the years, from 262 million in 2009 to 9 million in 2022. In 2021 and 2022, the Department produced postcards in English and French featuring a QR code for direct online access to two flagship publications, the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/76/1) and the report entitled “Our Common Agenda” (A/75/982), in the six official languages. Hard copies of each publication were limited to one per delegation. The Department procures 100 per cent post-consumer waste paper for all its print production requirements.

## **IX. Conclusions and recommendations**

### **A. Conclusions**

77. In 2022, the Secretariat continued to provide high-quality documents in a timely manner in all official languages, as well as high-quality conference services to Member States, and to achieve those aims efficiently and cost-effectively, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly.

78. To ensure the sustainability of its operations, the Department enhanced its conference management systems to deliver better services to Member States and the public at large. System integration and the harnessing of data on meetings and documentation were at the centre of innovation initiatives and are already producing tangible benefits in terms of productivity, workflow management and capacity planning, as well as the enhancement of client-facing services. Almost all key performance indicators showed an improvement compared with 2021.

79. The Department continued to focus on succession planning through targeted outreach activities and the organization of examinations both for staff positions and for placement on the global roster of language professionals eligible for contractual or temporary work.

80. All these efforts will help to ensure the long-term sustainability of conference-servicing operations and the further expansion of integrated global management.

### **B. Action recommended of the General Assembly**

81. **It is recommended that the General Assembly:**

(a) **Take note of the present report;**

(b) **Request the Secretary-General to present future calendars on an annual basis, in line with resolution 77/267, by which the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue with the submission of the programme budget according to an annual cycle.**