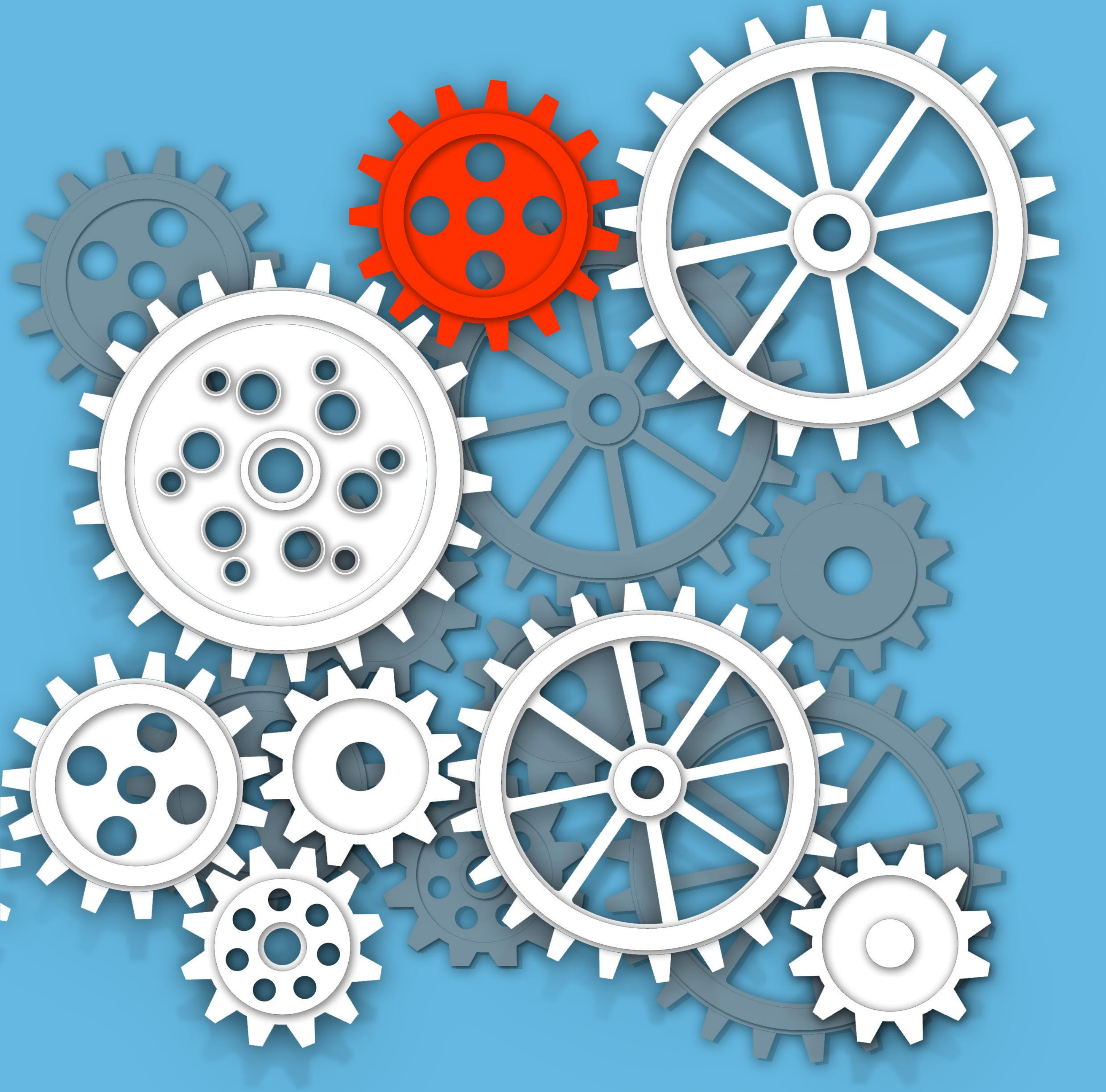
UNITED NATIONS
Special Assistant's Manual

An insider's guide to working with executives

Cristian Mazzei



SPECIAL ASSISTANT'S MANUAL

An insider's guide to working with executives

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Foreword by Erik Solheim, Executive Director of United Nations Environment

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FOREWORD

Special Assistants have a key, but complex role in the United Nations, dealing with a myriad of different tasks to support the most senior officials in the United Nations. They provide an anchor for the organization, coordinating work, collating knowledge and ensuring the smooth management of administrative functions.

Often working behind the scenes, Special Assistants provide objective, accurate and results oriented advice that links together the pieces and priorities of the United Nations machine. Whether in the office or on the road, senior officials depend on them to juggle bureaucratic hurdles, intervene rapidly and identify solutions - often before we even know there is a problem!

This multifaceted role is often utilized (and under-utilized), on ad-hoc basis. Greater clarity on the role will help the organization to unlock its full potential, help staff to consider the challenges it offers as a career move and help new assistants to find their feet more quickly.

I hope this manual will allow senior officials, Special Assistants and teams across the United Nations to make the best use of this invaluable support.

Erik Solheim
Executive Director
United Nations Environment Programme

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Privileged and proud to have their artwork as part of this manual, Greta Lusoli, Cedric Layrac, Marc Clores, Fatih Öztosun and Francesca Chan deserves a big “thank you” for his contribution in adding some color and humor to this document.

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The opinions offered in this manual do not reflect those of the United Nations, for whom I currently work as a Special Assistant.

Cristian Mazzei
September 2017

INTRODUCTION

The Special Assistant position is still an unknown entity. While this function is present in most United Nations departments and offices, there is no specified interpretation of its exact role within the UN organizations.

This manual offers practical suggestions to Special Assistants on how to execute their functions in the United Nations effectively and efficiently. It also offers guidance to senior managers on how to best take advantage of their Special Assistants so that the needs of their offices are met. It also emphasizes the ideal qualifications for candidates to fill this position in terms of experience, competencies and skills. Sample Terms of Reference are included for specific organizational needs.

The manual is divided into three parts. The first part is a list of core functions that most Special Assistants perform within the organization. The second part lists other possible function that a Special Assistant might be required to perform in a specific organization or duty station. The third part highlights the ideal profile for a suitable candidate to perform this job, including UN competencies, skills and expertise.

UNITED NATIONS STRUCTURE

The United Nations organizations' structures are complex and can vary across the United Nations system. Some organizations are concentrated in one location, while others are scattered around the globe with several field offices. Internal structures can also vary and the names of their components can differ from one organization to another.
For practicality, this manual will use consistently some general terms to describe organization's components, as follows:

Special Assistant: A Special Assistant provides substantive support to a senior staff member to support him/her in performing managerial and strategic functions. Special Assistants fall into the Professional Category and the post level can range from P-3 to P-5 level.

Principal: This is the generic term to define a senior staff member. Principals are usually at UN Director Level or above (D-2, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations (USG) or Assistant Secretary-General (ASG). This can include the Head of the organization, Deputies, Directors leading a department.

Personal Assistant: The Personal Assistant is a General Service/Support Staff post. Common task of this position includes secretarial work, managing schedules, Principal travels and dealing with administrative issues.

Organization: It represents the general term to identify a United Nations organization. This can include UN Agencies, funds and programmes, peacekeeping or political missions.

Headquarters (HQ): It denotes the location where the decision-making and most of the important functions of an organization are coordinated. The Head of the organization resides in the Headquarters, supported by an Executive Office.

Out-posted Offices: They are United Nations office presence from a particular UN organization away from the Headquarters. They can include Regional Offices, Sub-regional Offices, Country offices and field offices.

Head of the Organization: The Head is the most senior UN Staff member in the organization, normally appointed with the Rank of Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations. In UN agencies, it can be referred as Executive Director or Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Peacekeeping and Political Mission.

Deputy: Heads of organization are usually supported by one or more deputies at the rank of Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations. They can include Deputy executive Directors or Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

Executive Office: It serves as the organization's corporate coordination hub in support to the Head of the Organization. It provides policy guidance, liaises with other UN agencies, and provides guidance to staff and the Senior Management Team on administrative and policy matters in order to ensure good practices across the organization.

Chief of Staff: Located in the Executive Office, this position is responsible for ensuring the integrated and coherent functioning of the organization.

Departments: Each organization, based on their size, is composed by departments that focus on a specific theme and is led by a Director (D-2 Level). Departments can have sub-level components called units that deal with a specific aspect of the theme under the department's responsibility. With the term "departments", we can refer to Division or Sections etc.

PART I – CORE FUNCTIONS

Role of the Special Assistant, an Overview

The Special Assistant is an "all-around" job, performed by of professionals able to make things happen, regardless of the nature or complexity. As situations and job exigencies vary, the Special Assistant needs to be adaptable, flexible and keen to change, often juggling multiple tasks at the same time.

A Special Assistant often assists Principals in the United Nations organization, including the UN Secretariat and UN agencies, funds, programmes and peacekeeping operations. An equivalent of the Special Assistant role is found throughout the organization, often with a different position name, such as Executive Officer, Executive Manager, Coordination Officer, Special Adviser and Project Manager.

The Special Assistant is often confused with the Personal Assistant. Most Principals have both a Special and a Personal Assistant. While the Special Assistant is a Professional post, the Personal Assistant is a General Service/Support Staff post. The Special Assistant typically deals with the substance of the work in support of the Principal and the department. The Personal Assistant works more as a secretary in direct support of the Principal, managing schedules and dealing with administrative and issues.

The exact role of a Special Assistant can vary greatly depending on the organization, department, mandate and activities, but there a number of core tasks that are common to the job. These core functions are provision of advice, coordination of activities, support to travel and missions, and communications

MULTITASKING

Advice

Giving advice is one of the most important roles of the Special Assistant and constitutes the most significant support a Principal can receive. The advice should be aligned with the Principal's overall vision and the organization's mandate, and most of all, it has to be discreet, confidential, and valued. The Special Assistant must invest particular effort in building a trusting relationship with the Principal by demonstrating competence, knowledge of the subject matter, dedication to the mandate. This process can be lengthy but will help Principals to trust the Special Assistant's judgment and not seek advice elsewhere (Wesslau, 2013).

The best way to give advice is to gather intelligence and consult widely to develop a clear understanding of the issue ahead. It is also important to know the particular context and have and emphatic understanding on what is at stake for the Principal, including needs, feelings and concerns. It is also very important to adapt to the Principal's style and have an empathic understanding of what is at stake. Some Principals may prefer to receive advice exclusively from the Special Assistant, who, acting as a gatekeeper, would in this case procure and analyze information to generate the required advice. Other Principals prefer to be exposed directly to different perspectives from subject experts in order to draw their own conclusions. Some prefer written advice, while others prefer oral. Principals should clarify whether they prefer clear and straightforward recommendations or a wide discussion of options and scenarios before making decisions. In both cases, the Special Assistant helps package recommendations by presenting the facts and sources of information and clarifying possible outcomes of the decision (Garvin and Margolis, 2015).

The Special Assistant should determine the Principal's preference for the type of advice they are willing to receive by asking candid probing question, as the Principal's acceptance of advice can vary tremendously depending on their background and comfort in dealing with specific themes. Some Principals are subject experts who rarely need any technical advice, while others are more focused on managerial issues, and welcome advice on technical/substantive aspects. The Special Assistant must provide specific advice or recommendations, emphasizing how the advice is communicated by avoiding jargon and selecting only valid, realistic and explicit options. (Wesslau, 2013).

It is ideal when the Principal and Special Assistant both recognize that they can be honest, sincere, mutually trustworthy and respectful of each other's opinions and judgements. This includes the ability to express disagreement on issues. Divergent points of view are possible and integral to a constructive decision-making process. Such views stimulate discussion, generate new ideas, discourage premature decision-making and force the Principal to explore the issues and interests at stake from all angles. A Special Assistant who is too complaisant and repeats the Principal's views adds no valuable contribution. (Wesslau, 2013).

It is crucial for the Principal and Special Assistant to share the same basic understanding of situations and objectives. The Principal should share enough information for the Special Assistant to have a clear picture of the problem, what are the bottleneck, invested interests and desired outcomes. Too much information can be counterproductive too as the Special Assistant could lose the focus on the central issues. When sharing information, Principals should feel free to share confidential or uncomfortable information at their own discretion. This open and genuine channel of communication will help the Special Assistant to get a complete picture and establish a relationship of trust. In turn, the Special Assistant is required to put aside bias or judgmental thinking in order to offer impartial, informed advice on the basis of solid information and thinking.. All situations are unique. While experiences can offer a lead on how to deal with the issue at hand, it is very unlikely that the same solution applies to different cases.

Advice can be beneficial in several ways. It can serve as argument for the Principal to get a better understanding of a situation. They can also test elaborated options and visualize their potential consequences, or provide a deeper understanding of the problem by offering a different point of view and suggest alternative course of action. The Principal can contribute greatly in making the task of giving advices more efficient. Principals should seek advice from the right people, ideally subject matter experts, including those willing to tell uncomfortable truths. Receiving advice for confirmation of already established decisions is less useful than seeking advice to challenge them. When receiving advices, the Principal should weigh all options in terms of cost and benefits, how relevant the advice is in case of rapid change of situation, what the repercussions are and what contingencies necessary. Combining advices from different sources can also lead to successful decisions. Finally, receiving advice is should not precluded to a specific time but rather a sequenced process of decision, implementation and learning, for this reason, the Principal should always give feedback on what option was selected and for what reason. (Garvin and Margolis, 2015).

The Principal always makes the final decision and is accountable for it. Special Assistants, while doing their best to formulate their recommendations, understand that Principals might decide not to follow their advice, for various reasons. This is very normal and does not represent a failure and compromise the relation of trust among the two. Regardless, the Special Assistant must be ready to provide additional advice, based on the consequence of the decision taken and continue supporting the Principal.

Formulating Options

Special Assistants can help Principals in taking the best-informed decision by formulating options, including through option papers (see ANNEX I). These papers can support complex decision-making or generate an organization's position in relation to a topic.

The structure of an option paper should include a background and rationale section, a statement of the issue for decision, possible options and the recommended option. A frank presentation of the issues and options ensure that the Principal makes a full-informed decision. Proposed options should be realistic to implement and clearly different from each other, have a set of criteria to determine the risk of their implementation and advantages and disadvantages. In the options paper, the recommended option should appear the last to ensure that the Principal consider also all other options. A risk analysis and consideration of lessons learned are useful to substantiate the recommended option, which has to be clear and specific as to what action is required, by whom and by when. The Special Assistant should widely consult with stakeholders and subject matter experts to inform existing options and build internal support, including presenting differing positions and concerns if they could not be resolved yet. Although the Special Assistant provides support in formulating options, the Principal ultimately makes the decisions and is accountable for the consequences. (DPKO 2008)

Prioritize Principal's attention

The Special Assistant has to determine what information is appropriate to flag for Principals. As Principals normally receive a high volume of requests for action or decisions to make, the Special Assistant can help determine what is most urgent and important. A simple way to prioritize the Principal's actions is to use a combination of the Eisenhower Matrix and Pareto Analysis.

Pareto Analysis is a prioritizing tool that identifies which piece of work has the greatest overall impact. It is based on the Pareto Principle (80/20 Rule), stating that 20 percent of completed tasks can address 80 percent of deliverables or objectives. To use Pareto Analysis, identify a list of tasks and score their impact. Then focus on those tasks, which have the highest score in terms of impact (Mind Tools 2017).

The Eisenhower Matrix is used to prioritize tasks by importance and urgency. This tool helps in categorize them in four quadrants and suggest action on how to deal with them:

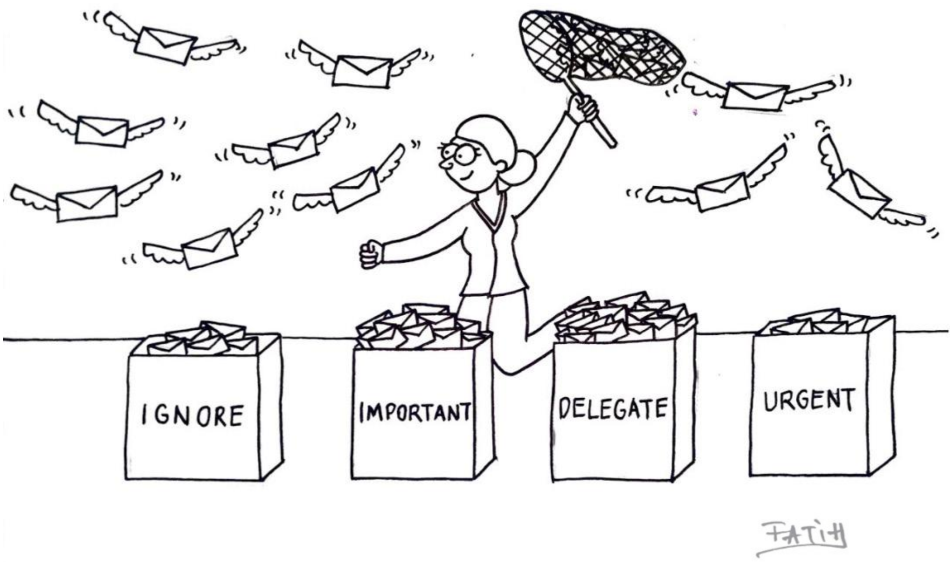
URGENT AND IMPORTANT **DO IT IMMEDIATELY**	NOT URGENT AND IMPORTANT **PLAN**
URGENT AND NOT IMPORTANT **DELEGATE**	NOT URGENT AND NOT IMPORTANT **IGNORE**

The first quadrant, **Do It immediately**, contains tasks that are important for the Principal or the organization and need to be performed urgently (ideally the same day). You could use a timer to help concentrate and complete as much of them done as possible. An example of this type of task is reviewing an important document or decision that only the Principal can make.

The second quadrant is called **Plan**. Its tasks are important, but less urgent. These tasks must be processed in a timely manner before they become urgent. Good planning is helpful to prevent these tasks from sliding into the first quadrant. An example of this is regular reporting to the Head of an organization or to Member States. Ideally, you should keep most of the task in the second quadrant and leave only fewer things unplanned. This reduces stress by limiting urgent and important tasks to a manageable and planned date.

Quadrant three is for those tasks that can be **delegated**, as they are less important for the Principal or the department, but still rather urgent. The Special Assistant should keep track of delegated tasks and check on their progress regularly. An example of a delegated task is providing inputs to a report or work-plan of another office. This request may be delegated by suggesting an alternative person for the job or by giving the caller the necessary information to allow him/her to deal with the matter individually.

The last quadrant is called **Ignore** and represents those task that has little or no value, for example unsolicited email, spam messages etc. Based on these prioritization tools, the Special Assistant can produce a to-do list for the Principal. This can be reviewed together daily or weekly, according to the Principals' preference. (Covey 2014)



PRIORITAZE

Coordination

The Special Assistant post grade level varies depending on the level of the Principal supported and the organization. In general, Special Assistants at the P-3/P-4 level might support Principals at the D-2 level, Divisional Directors or Chiefs of Staff. P-4 /P5 level posts might support Assistant Secretary-Generals, Deputy Executive Directors and Deputy Special Representatives of the Secretary-General. P-5 level posts normally support Executive Directors, Heads of Organization or Special Representatives of the Secretary-General in peace operations.

Special Assistants engage with other senior officials, often the direct reports of the Principals. Regardless of the Special Assistants' seniority level, they are granted authority and directly address senior staff members. The Special Assistant is often requested to perform a number of tasks on the Principal's behalf.

Depending on the organization's culture, the respect for hierarchy can be more or less enforced. In both cases, the Special Assistant must be able to break protocol. The Principal can help this process by delegating certain tasks to the Special Assistant, who will perform them on the Principal's behalf. This can be done in staff or individual meetings when the Special Assistant accompanies the Principal.

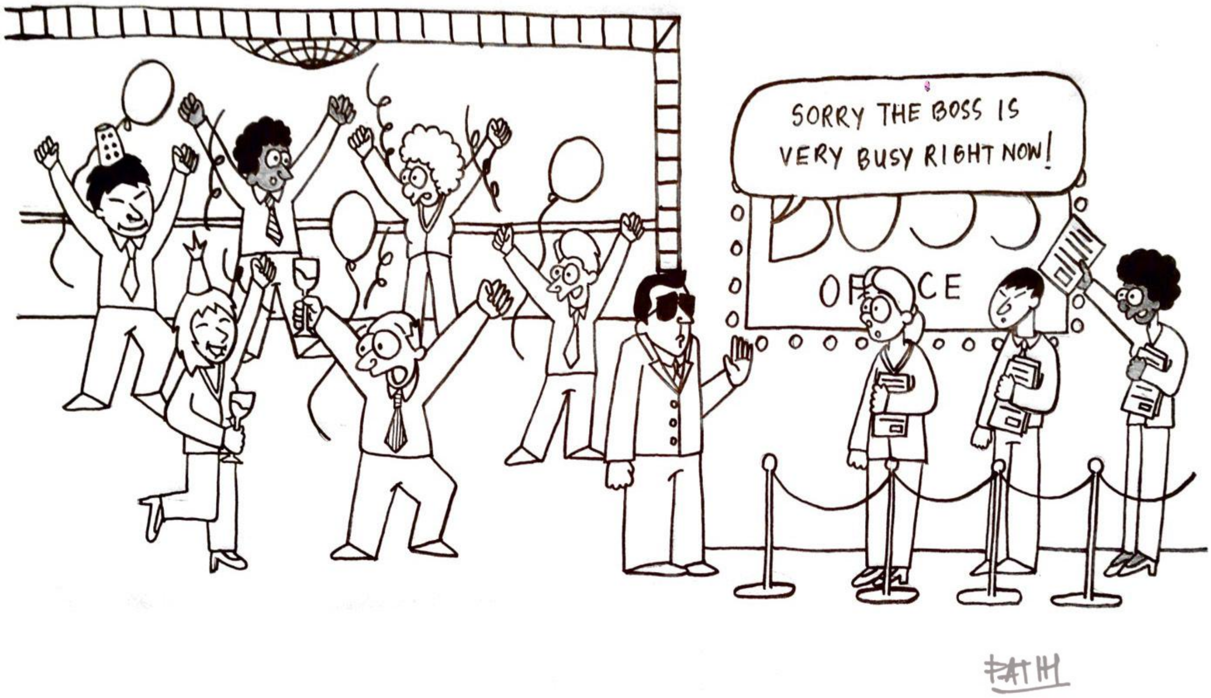
The Special Assistant can gain the trust and respect of senior staff by demonstrating competence and knowledge of the subject matter. It has to be clear that the Special Assistant is acting on behalf of the Principal, but also in support of the rest of the department or the organization. Special Assistants spend a lot of time tasking senior staff on behalf of their Principals, and a lot of time correcting or revising the work of senior colleagues, including those who are experts in areas. Openness, humbleness and client orientation skills will help senior staff accept the role of the Special Assistant. However, the Special Assistant must avoid being perceived as the "boss spy" or over-exercising this assigned delegation role, as colleagues can negatively perceive it and jeopardize working relationships and mutual respect. The Principal plays a vital role in setting the scene of this collaboration by explaining to colleagues and stakeholders the term and condition of the Special Assistant's authority. The Special Assistant should never abuse this derived authority and should rather build trust in the team and across teams based on professionalism and competence.

DERIVED AUTHORITY

Access to the Principal: keeper vs. Open Door Policy

Open door policy allows anyone to show up at the Principal's office and present their requests or concerns. While this approach is positive in creating a collaborative working environment and boosting staff morale, it can absorb much of the Principal's time. One way to deal with this is to block off time in the Principal's calendar for unscheduled visits. A quick fix could also be to dedicate a limited amount of time in the Principal's schedule for unsolicited visits and block additional time as "closed door".

On the other hand, gatekeepers can indirectly impact the policy-making process by controlling who has access to the Principal and what information will reach them. By filtering requests for meetings and providing information and support on behalf of the Principal, gatekeepers safeguard the Principal's time. While this approach is efficient and allows the Principal to focus on strategic issues, it can also create a feeling of distance within the department. For this reason, gatekeepers must act with sensitivity and use their best judgement while performing this role.



GATEKEEPER

Effective Follow-up Actions

Decisions need to be implemented in a timely fashion and often require action by different entities in the department/office. The Special Assistant communicates the required details to all responsible parties, ensures the information is understood and accepted, and confirms that tasks are assigned accordingly. Responsible parties can include senior staff and Heads of departments and units, who have busy schedules. In such cases, the Special Assistant can use different methods to remind responsible parties about deadlines and action required, such as group e-mails, phone calls, instant messaging or face-to-face communication, according to the level of urgency.
It is also useful for the Special Assistant to keep a to-do list that includes, decision taken, required actions and who is responsible for them. This to-do list, can be shared with the Principal through the latest cloud technologies (i.e. SharePoint or One Note), to provide real time information on progress made.

Effective Tasking

Tasking is delegating an action where the Principal is responsible. The Special Assistant must task the right office and provide clear instructions and deadlines. Tasking can relate to a variety of actions, such as preparing a response to a letter, providing options on decisions to make, conducting research or assessments, providing advice or reaching out to external partners. Once the tasked office prepares their response, the Special Assistant discusses next steps with the Principal. Sometimes the Principal requires further information or advice before making a decision. In this case, the Special Assistant can reach out to the relevant offices to convey the message. A tasking log is a useful tool for Special Assistants to identify the office responsible for reviewing the request, deadlines and action needed (See ANNEX II). The tasking log can include what kind of action is needed: draft, consolidate, review, approve and who is responsible for them. Finally, it can also provide further guidance on how to complete the task, what is the Principal's desired course of action or modalities.

Setting Meetings

The Special Assistant, together with the Personal Assistant, has control over the Principal's agenda. By prioritizing meetings, they ensure that the Principal has adequate time to efficiently fulfill the representation role. For example, meetings with Member State delegations, donors, Heads of organizations or CEOs of companies should be given priority. In the case of a packed schedule, buffer time between meetings should be guaranteed so that the Principal has enough time to prepare for each. Briefing packages are useful for this purpose and should include a briefing note (see below), recent correspondence, input from colleagues and details about the participants. At times, especially when technical issues are discussed, other colleagues or subject matter experts can be invited to assist the Principal in the meeting.

The Front Office and Special Assistant ensure that regular meetings between the Principal and other senior managers are scheduled, as much as availability and respective travel schedules permit. For this purpose, it is useful to schedule recurring meetings. In most organizations, the most common meetings are:

- Principal Head of the organization meets the Chief of Staff – daily for 30 to 60 minutes
- Principal meets the Deputy – weekly for 1 hour
- Principal meets bilaterally with each director – weekly for 60 minutes
- Office management meeting (directors as a group) – weekly for 60 minutes
- Thematic meetings or special initiatives – monthly for 60 minutes
- Principal with Young Professionals (JPO, UNV, Interns) – bi-monthly for 1 hour
- Principal with support staff – bi-monthly for 1 hour
- Principal with staff association - quarterly for 1 hour
- Town hall meeting with all staff – quarterly for 2 hours

Meeting minutes

During these meetings, the Special Assistant will prepare meeting minutes. The main purposes for meeting minutes are to capture information about the conversation, in particular decisions and action points, and to assign responsibility and deadlines for follow-actions. The minutes should be action-oriented and present only the highlights of discussion. The nature of each action should be described, have a responsible person or group assigned and a have a timeline for completion. There is no need to record the verbatim of the conversation, unless it is an official statement or key position where the wording used has a particular and desired meaning. When drafting the final version of the minutes, it is good practice to consult with meeting participants to verify that all ideas, positions and action are correct. For complex or multi-session meetings, Special Assistants can seek support of other minute's takers or draft them jointly.

The language should be precise, succinct and direct, ideally with one idea per paragraph. The use of reported speech helps in identifying who has said what, in particular if the Principal or other high-level interlocutors are making a statement of defining a position. (I.e. The Executive Director mentioned that President Smith had agreed to fund the operations…).

The Principal approves the meeting minutes and then they should be distributed to relevant colleagues for their information and action. A minutes template (in Annex III) should include participants and main points discussed, as well as action points, their due dates and responsible staff. As a follow up, the Special Assistant should send reminders and liaise with responsible individuals to ensure action is taken.

Meetings at the Principal's Location

The Personal Assistant manages the Principal's daily schedule in consultation with the Special Assistant. The following should be considered in the decision-making process:

- Priority is given to senior members of the Diplomatic Corps (Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives).
- Meetings with external partners are normally scheduled at the rank or protocol equivalent level. In other words, the Principal should meet with visitors who cannot meet with any other manager due to their rank equivalent, protocol or professional courtesy. All meeting requests should be reviewed and delegated to the Deputy or senior managers as appropriate.
- Relevant staff members may be invited to join the Principal in meetings with external partners in order to follow up on the meeting outcomes.
- The Special Assistant meets with individual staff members and may opt to raise any personal issues with the Principals before a meeting is scheduled.

TIME KEEPER

Travel

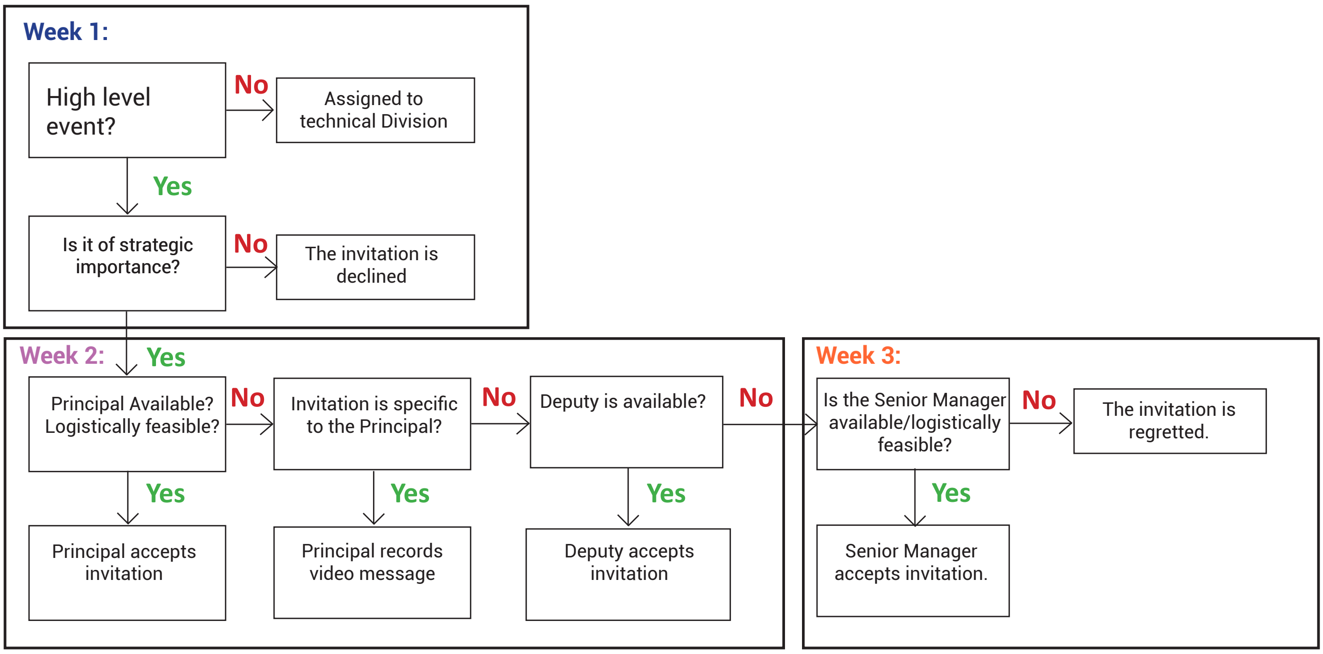
Principals travel often. Their duties require attending various events, conferences or courtesy calls with government officials and private sector's Chief Executive Officers.

Planning the Mission

The Principal's travel has a variety of purposes such as attendance at high-level events, representation of the organization at stakeholder and donor meetings, outreach missions and so on. Proposals for the Principal's mission stem from external event invitations or a specific department within the organization. The Special Assistant's planning role is to review these proposals and assess which missions most greatly impact the organization's mandate. Considering that the Principal's time is limited, strategic planning is paramount.

In some cases, the mission may hold great value for the organization's mandate, but the Principal is not available. In such cases, it is recommended to delegate the mission to another Principal at the same hierarchical level, or to other subject matter experts. The organization's representation at the event is very important for its visibility.

The following decision workflow chart summarizes the processing of invitations for Principals to participate in international meetings, conferences and other events:



Initial Screening of Invitations

The Special Assistant screens the invitations to determine the level of representation or participation at the event and requests the relevant technical department to verify the event's strategic importance. The Front Office assists with processing. The Special Assistant and Personal Assistant should arrange regular "scheduling meetings" with the Principal to review invitations and prioritize missions. The following information should be available during the scheduling meetings:

- The summary of invitations
- The Principal and Deputy's calendars
- Flight options for proposed missions

During the meeting, the following decisions should be made:

- Confirmation of the invitations accepted by the Principal, and representation options for the rest
- Broad mission outlines combining invitation(s) with political engagement and office visits
- Selection of flight options for proposed missions

Outcomes of the scheduling meeting are communicated immediately to the Front Office for further processing and calendars should be updated promptly.

Approved Missions

Once the Principal approves a mission, the Special Assistant prepares a mission outline containing a concept note on the mission's reason and objective, what the organization wants to achieve and how the Principal can best convey the relevant messages. This includes scheduling bilateral meetings with the Principal, key partners and stakeholders to review itineraries for any field office visits, and attendance at any public functions or ceremonies.

In preparing the mission outline and gathering invitations, the Special Assistant contacts relevant colleagues and subject experts in the organization and liaises with their counterparts in the location the mission will take place, including government officials, foreign affairs services, event coordinators, colleagues in out-posted offices and UN Resident Coordinators for the specific country.

The mission outline will also include logistics, venue itineraries, accommodation, Principal's time allotment and transportation arrangements. Most of these arrangements are at the discretion and preference of the Principal. The Special Assistant must ensure the Principal has enough time to successfully complete the mission based on their particular needs. For example, it is advisable that accommodation is close to the meeting venues and transportation logistics reflect the shortest route to the destination, limiting layovers. For ground transportation, traffic must be considered when advising ideal transportation options, as subways or trains can offer a faster and more cost-efficient solution. Colleagues on the ground of the mission site can provide this information.

In case something unexpected occurs, particularly when there is a tight meeting schedule, a Plan B is always advisable. Last minute car service arrangements can save a Principal delayed by a taxi driver strike or even a security incident (e.g. terrorist attack).

Finally, the Special Assistant must ensure his/her own travel plan, including accommodation, preferably the same as the Principal's, and transportation. For very complex events, particularly with many different partners or venues, it is good practice for the Special Assistant to travel to the first destination ahead of the Principal. In this way, the Special Assistant can ensure that all arrangements are properly in place, including entry pass validation and familiarization with the venues, such as locating meeting rooms, coffee stations and bathrooms.

Selecting Flights

The Front Office raises the Travel Request and tickets are issued once the itinerary is approved by the Principal. Criteria for selecting flights are:

- Preferred airlines (reliability and safety aspects)
- Flight connections / transit times
- Cost / value for money (selecting airlines from alliances / partnerships)
- Business class configuration and seats (flat beds for long-haul / overnight flights)
- Preferred connection hub / airports

The Personal Assistant pre-selects flight options and obtains relative costing for the Principal's approval, obtains security clearance before the principle's departure and informs staff of the name of Officer-in-Charge during the principal's absence. The Travel Requests must be approved by the Travel Unit at least 14 days before departure. The Front Office establishes visa requirements and processes the applications for the Principal and Special Assistant.

Accommodation and Logistics

The Front Office arranges and confirms the Principal's hotel reservations. The Principal should stay at the same hotel as the rest of the delegation unless the organizing agency advises differently for logistical or protocol reasons. The Front Office arranges the Principal's arrival protocol, airport transfers and car, and communicates any flight changes to the event organizer and host government to adjust arrival logistics.

Details of the arrangements, as well as contact details for the hotel, protocol and other arrival logistics, must be part of the briefing package (see below).

The briefing package should include a separate folder with the mission's logistical information, including:

- Electronic tickets and boarding passes
- Copies of national and UN passports
- Copies of visas/ entry permits
- Security clearance
- Confirmation of hotel reservations
- Contact details / telephone numbers of official car service, airport transfer and host organization

Packing and Accessories

When the Special Assistant accompanies the Principal on missions, a great degree of flexibility is required. In that respect, the following guidelines are recommended:

- Travel with hand luggage only and ensure that there is “spare capacity”, as inevitably books/papers accumulate to bring back to the office!
- Dress code is formal/business attire and conservative while keeping in mind that the Principal meets with high-ranking officials from diverse cultures. Kindly inquire about dress code of special events beforehand.
- Travel with a small laptop or preferably a tablet that is comfortable to carry all day. Luggage is often left at the hotel concierge or an office for collection on the way to the airport.
- Carry a duplicate copy of the Principal's mission file, as well as the logistics file.
- Carry sufficient business cards for the Principal and self.

Traveling with the Principal

The Special Assistant travels with the Principal to the airport at an arranged pick-up time and must always be on time. While traveling by vehicle, the Special Assistant sits behind the driver. It is useful to have at hand the name and telephone numbers of destination airport transfers, as well as the destination address.

On flights, the Principal travels in business class and the Special Assistant travels in economy class, as per UN Rules and Regulations.

The Special Assistant facilitates access to the conference venue and should:

- Become familiarized with the conference venue before the conference commences but If this is not possible, arrange for another staff member or the host organization to meet the Principal upon arrival and accompany him/her to the correct meeting venue;
- Ensure that access badges are available upon arrival (preferably collected in advance of the Principal's arrival);
- Get to know the conference venue as soon as possible and visit meeting venues in advance (for example, during the Principal's intervention or keynote speech) to optimize transitions in the Principal's schedule.

In Meetings with the Principal

While on mission with the Principal, the Special Assistant must be vigilant and ready to address last minute changes to the plan or additional requests for meetings. This is particularly true for media requests for interviews that are mostly last minute giving the Principal to prepare. In such cases, a detailed briefing package prepared during the planning phase could be sufficient to assist the Principal in responding to questions. For this purpose, it is beneficial to bring a copy of the briefing package while traveling, in either hard copy or electronic version, based on the Principal's preference. Paper copies allow the Principal to juggle additional notes or talking points, while electronic copies are more portable but subject to access limitations, faulty Wi-Fi or limited battery life. Some Principals prefer to review their briefing packages in advance of departure, on the plane while traveling or between meetings.

During meetings, the Special Assistant should note all actionable items and main topics. It is advisable for the Special Assistant to use portable devices to quickly send messages and e-mail if urgent action is needed. While the meeting is ongoing or close to conclusion, the Special Assistant must monitor the time and review the fastest route to the next meeting location. If the Special Assistant is also a subject matter expert, he/she may be invited to participate in the meeting by briefing stakeholders on specific matters that are less familiar to the Principal. Therefore, it is critical that the Special Assistant is familiarized with the briefing package prior to meetings.

During a "closed door" meeting, the Special Assistant must be sure the Principal is prepared with the best available information. If possible, the Special Assistant should stay connected with the Principal, such as through SMS or instant messaging. Occasionally the Principal will require the Special Assistant's presence in the meeting. If allowed, the Special Assistant will sit behind the Principal, listen to the discussion and proactively research information that may be needed. Thus, anticipation is key to effectively support the Principal. As high-level meetings follow a particular dress code, it is important that the Special Assistant blends in properly, adapts to the protocol, dresses accordingly and behaves as necessary. Movement around the room should be in a noninvasive, discreet manner and communication with the Principal should be kept at a low volume or done by passing a written message.

When meeting with celebrities, heads of state and other high profile dignitaries, or when participating in high-level functions and ceremonies, the Special Assistant can support the Principal with taking photos and posting them to relevant social media accounts.

At the end of each day, it is good practice for the Principal and Special Assistant to review actionable items and decide the right course of action. At this time, the Special Assistant can draft e-mails to the team back in the office and update them on highlights from the meeting and follow-up actions.

IN MEETINGS WITH THE PRINCIPAL

Return Journey

Preparing for the return journey implies wrapping-up all the pending issues, recording all follow-up action, collecting relevant material and business cards of partners. This information will feed into the Principal's travel report that is often drafted by the Special Assistant. The travel report should be succinct and action oriented, it will include the name, venue and date of the meeting and the main people contacted. The body of the travel report should include a brief summary of the content of the meeting and the outcome of the discussion followed by action points. The report needs clearance of the supervisor and then distributed as per indicated distribution list. (See ANNEX IV)

On the return travel logistics, the Special Assistant should aim to complete the on-line check-in process for the Principal and him/herself to save time at the airport. If the daily program prohibits early on-line check-in, the front office can remotely assist from Headquarters. The Special Assistant may need to accompany the Principal from the airport to their residence, and only thereafter completes the mission.

Holding Down the Fort

In some instances, the Principal will travel without the Special Assistant. This could be to reduce travel expenses or because the Special Assistant is needed to stay back and ensure the office runs smoothly while the Principal is away. During the Principal's absence, there will always be an Officer-in-Charge, normally the second in command, to make decisions. The Special Assistant may support the Officer-in-Charge as needed.

During this time, the Special Assistant will monitor department's activities, the Principal's e-mails (if allowed) and all correspondence. For routine decisions made by the Officer-in-Charge, the Special Assistant will provide necessary support and ensure proper "continuity". The same principles of tailor to the style of the Principal have to apply to the Officer-in-Charge. In these cases, The Special Assistant support might be substantive and technical as the Officer-in-Charge might be less knowledgeable of the themes at hand.

If a critical or urgent decision arises, the Special Assistant can contact the Principal while traveling via a quick mobile text message or email. Normally, Principals that are traveling have limited access to e-mails, but often monitor them sporadically. In such cases, the Special Assistant can attract the Principal's attention to a pressing e-mail by writing "MUST READ" or "ACTION" in the subject line.

It is recommended that the Special Assistant prepares a "back to the office" file with a summary of major events during the Principal's absence, including any decisions made on the Principal's behalf.

Communication

Reporting

Reporting is a daily activity for Special Assistant and many other staff members in the United Nations. Reports provide factual accounts of development, policy decision and recommendation on which the organization is engaged. Depending on their purpose and audience, reports can vary enormously in style, tone and length. For example, a Secretary-General Report is meant to inform member states on the situation in a specific country and provides recommendations for future operations. The style will be formal, very detailed with a predetermined structure. A code cable is the most commonly used formal communication with out-posted offices. Code cables are generally used to update on recent development or policy implementation and when the information is to be kept within the United Nations. Flash reports are short and succinct snapshot of an incident.

Frequency of reports can also vary widely depending on their nature. Some reports are periodic, others are more events driven. However, timing can be very important to determine the relevance of the information reported. In fact, to maximize impact and relevancy, a report should be issued as soon after the event occurs. Late reports have little valuable as decisions could be already obsolete. Analytical or thematic reports can be sent with less urgency, since they are not necessarily linked to an event, and often do not demand immediate action. Despite this, it is useful to provide Principals with the relevant context and adding impetus for reading such reports. There are many instances of reports not having been read because their importance or relevance were not recognized (Wesslau 2013).

When reporting, it is good practice to consult widely with all counterparts and verify information before submitting. Ideally, only one drafter should coordinate and collect inputs for consolidation. Reports should be cleared by an established entity (i.e. the Principal) who will provide quality check and be responsible for the information contained in the report.

The structure and contents of reports vary according to their nature and scope of each mission's mandate. Generally, all these reports comprise of three broad parts: an introduction; a main body describing developments on a number of main aspects and a final section containing recommendations.

The introduction generally provides the reasons for reporting and the reporting period.

The core sections provide a description of activities and developments relevant to report recipient. This section should be as factual as possible, provide data and objective description of the issue

The recommendations section of the report should provide:

- an overall assessment of the prevailing situation, highlighting significant developments during the reporting period;
- proposes courses of action and recommendations to fulfill the organization's mandate,

Credibility, effective communication and aesthetics are all important components of good writing. If a report is clear and succinct it will be taken more seriously, and used as the basis for action, than if the report is poorly written. If Principals cannot understand a report well, it will be ignored as ineffective language and style impede understanding of substance. Using Plain language is highly recommended.

Plain Language

The world is revolutionizing the methods by which people utilize information. We are replacing books, reports and newspapers with content that we access via smartphones, tablets and even watches. It spreads through websites, news feeds and social media platforms. Today, people read more content, and more quickly than before. Using plain language maximize potential outreach. This is done by presenting information in a way that is accessible, clear and concise and helping the audience to better absorb these messages and take action. Some simple tricks will help any audience to understand what you want to say, increasing the chance of them remembering it, sharing it and acting on it.

Short text, paragraphs & sentences:

- Use short sentences, less than 20 words.
- One sentence should contain a single idea.
- Delete any unnecessary or repeated words

Simple words:

- Use alternative word with fewer syllables or letters that means the same,
- Use the synonym options in Microsoft Word, select and right click on the word to get it.

No acronyms, jargon or technical terms:

- Imagine your audience as non-expert of the subject.
- Write full titles or acronyms the first time, then they can be used

Active and positive:

- Replace past tense words or phrases with active or future alternatives
- Replace passive with active tense
- Rephrase a sentence to make it positive rather than negative

Get to the point fast:

- The most important message comes first
- The message should be clear and unambiguous.

Make it stick:

- Talk to the hearts and mind of your audience
- Make sure your reader care about
- Show how does it have an impact or produce tangible results

Easy tips to check your text

- Read it out loud – even better, listen while somebody else to read it out loud (ideally somebody who does not know the topic). This technique helps in spotting complicated sentences, long words or repetition.
- Put the text away, do something else and then read with fresh eyes.
- Use Word Readability Statistics

Depending on which version of Word you have:
Left click: *'Review'* - *'Spelling & Grammar'* - select *'Options'* box
Alternatively, Left click: *'Review'* - right click *'Spelling & Grammar'* - select *'Customize Quick Access'*

Then follow same steps for both
'Proofing' on left hand menu bar
'Show readability statistics' in main section
Select *'Grammar & style'* from adjacent drop down menu
Run spell check and you get a box at end

Code Cables

The most common internal high-level reports in the United Nations are code cables. Special Assistants play a crucial role in drafting and revising code cables and ensuring the organization follows established procedures. Code cables are used for formal communication within the United Nations system for the attention of senior management or Headquarters. To ensure a consistent and high standard of outgoing code cables, all staff members who draft code cables should follow the guidelines. Code cables should be concise and succinct, not exceeding four pages. Authors should bear in mind that senior management often lack time to fully read code cables and may only read the summary and conclusion to understand its general purpose. In some cases, the target audience may not share the same technical knowledge of the subject matter. Code cables should be formatted in accordance with the attached Code Cable Template (ANNEX V) and structured as follows:

- Summary: All code cables exceeding one page must begin with a summary. The summary should give the reader an immediate appreciation of the subject treated in the code cable and any main conclusion or observation.
- Main points: The narrative of the code cable should be presented in main points. Keep to one point per paragraph and use subheadings if a main point is presented over several paragraphs. When presenting a chronology of events or the position of different stakeholders, strive to provide commentary whenever necessary for better understanding of context or nuance.
- Conclusion: All code cables exceeding one page must end with a conclusion. The conclusion should typically present a position, suggested way forward, and challenges or elements of achievement for the attention of senior management at HQ and other recipients with code cable facilities.
- The Code cable drafter name and Department should appear at the end of the cable.

Code cables must be classified based on urgency and sensitivity as follows:

- Urgency: Reply to, or act on, incoming code cables marked "Immediate" within the same day and incoming code cables marked "Most Immediate" upon receipt.
- Sensitivity designations: Use the designation "Only/Confidential" sparingly for "information whose unauthorized disclosure could reasonably be expected to cause damage to the work of the UN." Use the designation "No Distribution/Strictly Confidential" for "information whose unauthorized disclosure could reasonably cause exceptionally grave damage to or impede the conduct of the work of the UN." (United Nations, 2010)

Code cables workflow could be as follows:

- Code cables should be submitted by the drafting office through the relevant Head of department to the Chief of Staff.
- The submission should include:
  a. A routing slip indicating the drafter, who was consulted and the approver, typically the Head of department;
  b. The draft code cable with any attachments on the right inside page;
  c. Any document(s) referred to in the outgoing cable on the left inside page of the signature file.
- An electronic copy of the draft code cable should always be transmitted to the Special Assistant at the same time as the signature file is submitted to the Chief of Staff.
- Once approved and signed by the Head of Organization, the code cable will be transmitted to Headquarters. Once transmitted, the Office of the Chief of Staff will route the code cable to the drafting entity and relevant department for information, attention or action as appropriate.

Code cables that do not conform to the guidelines should be returned to the drafter for revision.

Briefing Packages and Briefing Notes

Principals attend many meetings, often several during the same day. They need to be prepared to convey the right message or achieve the objective of the discussion. Briefing notes are instrumental in helping the Principal to be prepared and keep the discussion focused on the objective set. A combination of briefing notes and other relevant background documents are called briefing packages (see ANNEX VI for briefing notes examples).

Briefing packages should be archived and properly labeled by event and country. This is particularly useful for future reference and in case of follow-up interaction with the same stakeholders or delegations.
Briefing notes can vary according to the nature of the department or organization; however, some general principles are common in most cases. Briefing notes should be short, timely, clear and relevant. It is advisable to write brief and to the point briefing notes, as Principals are often overwhelmed by all sort of reports and briefings. Therefore, succinct briefings have a high likelihood to be read.

The briefing notes should contain relevant and specific information for the mission/meeting at the end. Most of the times, briefing notes have to be tailored to the specific context of the meeting and their participants (e.g. meeting with a particular donor). Nevertheless, it is possible to use the same briefing for multiple meetings when the message being conveyed is the same.

Briefings notes need to be prepared in a timely manner. Often briefing preparations have a set of deadlines for submission that should be strictly respected. Submission deadlines, if respected, allow the Principal to prepare thoughtfully for the meeting and to ask for clarification or additional information.
The structure of briefing notes should clear and readable. There should be a logical flow throughout the documents. Using the Bottom Line Up Front approach, the briefing should start with the “lead”, the most important information, then “the body” should contain crucial information and conclude with “the tail”, which contains extra information. The lead should include the objective of the meeting and required outcomes. The body should include the key messages, arguments and sensitive issues. Finally, the tail will provide additional background information, including participant bios, annexes etc.

It is useful to include biographical information on the person the Principal meets if this is their first meeting, and/or updated information relevant to new developments or assignments of the person if they are meeting again. For each bilateral, it is important to ensure the Principal knows the three or four items that need to be addressed from the organization’s perspective. Bilateral meetings are often very short; thus, messaging tailored to the meeting and context is important. Ideally, the Special Assistant can liaise with their counterpart to know what items they are interested in raising, to ensure the Principal is not caught unawares.

Country briefing packages

Country briefing packages should provide a detailed, but succinct, overview of all key elements for the organization's interaction with a specific country. These country briefings should be prepared by out posted offices, if available, as they have close interaction with the country counterparts to get more updated and relevant information.

In addition to country briefings, it is useful for Principals to have more detailed information on specific topics of bilateral interest according to the individuals they are meeting, and the agenda items identified. Thus, effective country briefing packages require some additional briefing notes that are only possible through close work with all relevant substantive colleagues across the organization.

Country briefing may also include a newspaper article or two that highlight a recent disaster, new law, changing public sentiment on sustainability, issues that affect the organization’s work, or on imminent political change. Be mindful of the political context that the Principals encounter at the time of their visit. Lastly, effective country briefing packages also include a list of projects and activities in which the organization is engaged in that country, including funds received by the organization. It may also be useful to know the history of past engagements (as often past successful projects lead to hopes for future cooperation), and any future projects that are planned.

Briefings Workflow

Division/Departments are the leads and thus custodians of their substantive work in their area of responsibility. If Regional Officers are present in the organization, they are in charge of the relations and briefings with the countries under their area of responsibility.

In general terms, briefing notes should be prepared by the assigned Department/Division within their areas of responsibilities, with the motto: **"One Briefing Note – One Author holding the pen"**.

Department/Division Heads are responsible for quality assurance, proofreading, assigning drafting roles to relevant units, and coordinating input collection within the Department/Division or other Divisions and Regional Offices. Once the briefing note is completed, the Special Assistant should review it, The Personal Assistant can also support in reviewing it. Ideally, the briefing note should be shared in an editable electronic format. This will help the Special Assistant to edit minor changes before submission. If the briefing note asks for comments, the Special Assistant can send it back to the original authors for revisions to be submitted again.

Briefing notes deadlines are always a main challenge for Special Assistants. In fact, some executive offices give only a few days' notification for urgent briefing note requests. Ideally, deadlines for briefing notes should be at least seven days before the Principal's departure for mission, and four days beforehand for events in the Principal's location. Special Assistants can set up systems and internal policies to ensure those deadlines are respected, keeping in mind the Principal must have enough time to read the notes and have questions answered if needed.

All briefings should be approved/cleared by the Head of the Department before reaching the Executive Office of the Head of the organization. There may various colleagues working on inter-related issues that need to feed into a specific brief, including across Departments. In this case, the Special Assistant is in charge to coordinates input with colleagues within the Department, and where necessary, with those in other Departments. If the briefings are about a specific country, the respective Regional Director/Office has to be consulted. For all items of a regional and cross-regional nature, kindly ensure that the Regional Support Office is fully involved in the preparations.

COMMUNICATION EFFICIENCY

Talking Points

Principals use talking points during meetings or telephone conversations to convey information, to offer assistance, to request information or action, or to give thanks for contributions or support received. They help the Principal to stay on track with the discussion and focus on the objective and key messages of the meeting. Effective Talking point should be short and simple, capture the main points, tailored to the objective and audience. Before drafting talking points, the meeting objective has to be defined. The meeting objectives should indicate what the Principal should achieve through the meeting. Shorter and sharp talking points have more chance to have appositive impact in the discussion. As they are used in oral presentations, they should contain only the most relevant information. Using bullet point will help organize and prioritize the information by putting first the most important. Depending on the interlocutor, they can be strategic and forward-looking, more generic or targeted to a specific question.

Talking points should be written in full sentences and direct, straightforward language. The tone should be tactful and diplomatic, and the words carefully chosen, including gender-sensitive language. It is best to draft them in spoken language and in first person since they are meant to be read aloud by the Principal. Sentences and phrases should be kept short and simple. (DPKO 2009)

If the meeting is on complex or sensitive issues, talking points should anticipate and address possible scenarios. In these cases, “If asked” points can be included to be prepared if the interlocutor may ask about issues which the Principal would not necessarily raise. If meant to persuade, they should make a statement first, followed by facts to prove their validity. The level of detail of the talking points has to be adapted to the Principal and interlocutor’s level of knowledge of the substance. (Wesslau, 2013)

It is always good practice to consult widely when drafting talking points, including with relevant subject matters expert or out-posted offices. Keeping the main objective in mind, the talking point should reflect the corporate view and mandate of the organization, as Principals are often representing the whole organization rather than only part of it (DPKO 2009).
A background section can be added to give more details to allow the Principal to quickly get up to speed. It should include the most recent and relevant development and elements that are specific to the interlocutor. This can include the biography of the interlocutor, information about the origin of the meeting request and details of past encounter with the same interlocutor, along with conclusions from those meetings. As good practice, background information should be one paragraph per topic. If the background exceeds this limit it should be added as an attachment on a separate page.

A talking point template is available in ANNEX VII.

Writing Speeches

Speeches are public addresses. All speeches by the heads of UN organizations or their representatives become public documents once presented. Speeches include opening or closing remarks, keynote speeches, lectures and similar addresses. Therefore, narrative speeches (see template in ANNEX III) need to be prepared, with supporting facts and figures, as they will be posted on the organization's website after delivery.

These speeches are to be appended to the briefing notes. They are part of the briefing package that is to reach the Executive Office seven days before departure for a mission, and four days ahead of delivery if the event is in the Principal's location. The Special Assistant seeks final clearance of a speech from the Principal.

Speaking notes are prepared for interactive settings, such as panel discussions or media interactions. At times, it may be useful to have speaking notes drafted as statements, though generally they are internal, preparatory notes for the Principal. Speaking notes are most useful if they are written in short, concise language, ideally in bullet points. You may wish to consider using bold to highlight key points. Speaking notes should be appended to the briefing notes.

Speech preparation and structure

The Special Assistant might be required to prepare the Principal's speeches. The most important thing to do is to invest as much time as possible to prepare and get input from the Principal. People hear information differently than if they read (Dean 2011).The content for the speech should be:

- **Appropriate** (know your audience: demographics, geography, interest)
- **Visual** (swap slides for examples and metaphors that people can picture)
- **Memorable** (if people take away one message, make it yours)
- **Easy** (focus on the message, use a handout for technical details)
- **Simple** (avoid jargon, target lowest common denominator, don't try to impress)
- **Entertaining** (you're competing with smartphone and jet lag)
- **Short** (people switch off after 20 minutes, turn anything longer into Q&A)
- **Realistic** (Communication hierarchy creates Informing, understanding, reinforcing, changing and action – first is easy, few speeches do all)

Keep audience attention by using structure to them what to expect.

1. **Introduction/Grab attention:** What newspaper headline would you want to appear?
2. **The main body**: What are the messages/issues (list them, then work through)
3. **Conclusion**: What you want them to do when they leave the room?

1. **The Introduction: You need to win them over – fast.**
    - Find a hook the audience can relate to (e.g. personal anecdote, "on this day in history", current affairs, the venue. Quotes are good, but always attribute (or at least "as I read somewhere the other day")
    - Try some humor. Some self-depreciating humor can help if you have a bad slot, weak speaker or a difficult message
    - Surprise the audience by opening with an unexpected something factual or an anecdote
    - Let the audience know why you need their time and what you will ask of them at the end.

2. **The Main body: Decide what you want the outcome to be (try to limit to 3 messages)**
    - Clear messages: Say them up front, work through them and recap
    - Make it visual: memorable examples, what difference the topic makes
    - Inspire: simple ideas, personal examples and link to the audience
    - Credible: drench it in research. Start a file as soon as you know topic to collect articles, quotes, images as you find them to save time later

3. **The Conclusion: End strong**
    - Inspiration (wake them up for the punchline), Lesson learned (recap the main messages), Call to action (why they are there) & Clincher (make it stick)
    - Top and tail: close with the same hook as you did for the introduction
    - Make it clear: why I am here, why you are here

Design key messages

A key message is the overall driving force behind how you are perceived by an audience. It is akin to your brief response when someone asks you what you do. If you cannot communicate a clear, concise and compelling answer in less than one minute you risk losing the other person's attention, interest or support.

Sometimes the key message is about one thing: We can eradicate poverty by 2030. Other times, the key message is a broader statement: The eradication of poverty offers the country a means to accelerate the peace negotiations and development. The message is the overarching theme that holds an entire speech together. Reduce complex issues in one simple statement is not easy. However, overly complex and technical messages do not get attention. Simple and direct messages have great power to attract attention to your cause. Once attention is obtained, there are many more opportunities to explain it in detail (UNICEF 2012).

The primary message is the most universally compelling statement to all audiences. A primary message is often supported by secondary messages to provide further explanation. Secondary messages often explain how the objectives of the primary message will be met. There may be several secondary messages tailored to the specific needs of an audience.

A few simple guidelines can help in developing effective messages:

1. Define your goal and audiences

Without a clear definition of your goal, you cannot develop a clear, concise and compelling message. Part of defining the goal is to understand whether the goal is achievable and what resources might be needed. The audience will be governed by your goal.

2. Understand your audience

All audiences are different. The speaker has to find out what motivates them, how the goal will benefit them and what may hold them back from supporting the goal. You must also understand the best way to reach the audience and how your goal affects them.

3. Develop ideas, statements and arguments.

Find the message that will move the greatest number of people in the quickest manner possible. Your messages need to balance the rational with the emotional and speak to audiences with their terms and in their terms, in order to capture both hearts and minds. Many people believe something only when they see proof, in the form of facts. Others need to believe in something before they acknowledge the facts (Dean 2011).

4. Determine the primary and secondary message.

This is the one message that is clear, concise and compelling and appeals to the broadest audience. Priorities your secondary messages according to the priorities of your target audience.

Speech Style

The style and tone of the speech is as important as the content. These are a few tips for the Principal to improve their speech and how to deliver it more efficiently.

- Repetition sticks: repeat the messages, include alliteration (repeating the same letter/sound/word/ phrase at the start ("more sales, more profit and more growth").
- The rule of three is natural: t gives the speech rhythm and helps it stick (three messages, three repeated words etc.).
- In using figures: round them off (thirty thousand will stick, 34,627 won't).
- Help the audience visualize: '60,000 people' is hard to picture, 'enough to fill a stadium' sticks.
- Optimism: lets people believe they can fix the problem, not be buried by it.
- Keep it short: speech (20 minutes), phrase (13 words) and words (70% one syllable).
- Be human: No jargon, fancy words, synergies, acronyms, or clichés.
- Be yourself: Use the voice of the speaker not the writer.
- Get physical: for the speech layout think big fonts, extra spacing, bold words to emphasize, headings to navigate and page numbers (in case you drop it!).
- Read it aloud yourself or have a colleague read it to you.
- Time it: nobody ever complained about a speech being too short. Know your average reading speed, adapt and build in a margin.
- Recycle: polish and reuse, remembering to adapt for the audience.
- Presentation slides: If you really can't live without them then try just using images instead of words, but never read out bullet lists.

Using some humor, and the right kind, can help in various ways such as:

- making the speaker more likeable (self-deprecating humor helps win the audience);
- making a serious point/ diffusing a serious situation/ saying something indirectly;
- changing the direction or pace, adding impact and waking up the room.

A few additional points:

- If you're not funny, quote someone who is (there are plenty of quotation websites).
- Always attribute quotes or (at a push) use "as the saying goes" or "as I read the other" day, but don't be tempted to claim it as original as it could backfire.
- Play it safe - try it out on a trusted colleague.

Principals' Checklist

Public speaking is a skill. Improving is a process and does not happen overnight. It is normal to have butterflies, just use the checklist above to ensure that the butterflies fly in formation.

Preparation

- Research the audience and forum (how long do you have to speak, what is the format; what topics are expected, what the audience wants to hear from you; who else is speaking; are you dressed appropriately, etc.).
- Mark up the text of the speech (visual cues on the paper to help with emphasis, etc.).
- Rehearse, rehearse, and rehearse. Practice reading the speech as you will deliver it: aloud. Then edit again.
- Visit the room beforehand; check the technology, don't wait for your slot to discover it works and can be heard from the back.

Delivery/Appearance

- Standing straight/posture
    - No swaying
    - Not slumped over podium (try not to be glued behind it)
- Eye contact
    - Rehearse enough to look at audience (at least 2/3 of the time)
    - Look at the entire audience, not just the front center.
    - Facial expressions: Smile when appropriate
- Hand gestures and body language: Use movements contribute to/enhance my speech (not a distraction)

Delivery/Voice

- Check the appropriate volume
- Vary the speed of delivery to suit the material and the audience
- Vary the pitch at which you speak, using "highs" and "lows" to build emphasis and rhythm
- Introduce pause and emphasis to give the audience time to absorb your point
- Practice articulation and pronunciation, especially if you or the audience is not working in native language

After delivery

- Rely on the advice of others
- Ask for feedback & study your performance (video/audio recording)
- Practice, practice, practice (if you speak regularly on the same topic, refine and polish before and after to constantly improve)

Speech General Tips

1. Dialogue not Monologue
Pick a person in the middle of the room or a person for each third of the audience (left, right, center). Keep going back to them. Think of your speech this way: you are having a conversation with these specific people; everyone else is just listening in.

2.The Slide Rule: Don't Read Them
You should never have to read slides, nor should your audience. A quick scan should be enough as slides should accentuate a point, not make the point.

3.Story is Stored (and Numbers Numb)
Contrary to what many fear, the audience wants you to succeed. So, tell a story. Sharing something they will remember and even revealing a little about you (emotion) will help form a lasting and meaningful connection.

4.Stop Talking to Keep Them Listening
Silence is golden. Well-timed and intentional pauses add drama, help emphasize points, and allow the speaker to both gather their thoughts and appear thoughtful. When appropriate, take a deep breath, enjoy the moment, and be secure with the sound of silence. If you really fear public speaking and especially a vacuum created by silence, try flipping the perception: the audience is not looking at you. You are looking at them.

5.Turn it Up and Smile
Bring the energy. On stage, remember that you are not unlike an actor. The audience feeds of your energy and reciprocates. Smiling at the beginning of a speech, and at appropriate times during a speech, makes you likeable, it relaxes the audience and often the speaker, too.

SPEECH TIPS

Dealing with the media

There are proper rules and regulation on how United Nations staff members have to interact with the media. Considering that any staff member is perceived to represent the organization, it is good practice to check with the media relations team in the organization beforehand. This could be particularly important also if the organization want to leverage this opportunity to send to the media a particular corporate message or position of the organization. In case of an unplanned encounter, these tips could be useful:

- **A journalist is never "off duty".** Whatever you say can always be reported. If you say: "this is off the record", the journalist will just use that to get confirmation from another source, but will still break the story.
- **Just stick to your specialist subject** and the agreed line to take if you encounter journalists during a Q&A session, workshop or coffee break.
- **Be aware** that a journalist may present a totally erroneous theory, just to make you react and get the information they really wanted.
- **Never feel obliged to answer** media questions. It is perfectly acceptable to say "sorry but this is not in my area", and refer them to the Media Relations team.
- **Social media (bloggers etc.)** should be treated in the same way as traditional media – they still want to break a story and find a quote.

Correspondence Management

The Special Assistant is responsible for managing all outgoing correspondence from the office. This might include official letters to government officials, embassies, civil societies and corporate organizations. The Special Assistant has to revise and edit the documents to ensure the content and format is correct. Formats can differ greatly if the Principal is addressing a letter to an ambassador, the Head of UN agencies or the CEO of a company. Several correspondence guidelines and manuals can help the Special Assistant in this task (e.g. UN correspondence manual, OCHA editorial Style guide, DPKO correspondence for Political Affairs Officers).

Sometimes the Special Assistant is not the primary correspondence drafter, for example, when the correspondence contains technical information. In such cases, the Special Assistant may have to compare and consolidate inputs from various subject matter experts. In case of discrepancies or contradicting information, the Special Assistant will go back to the input providers for clarification to ensure the content is correct.

By doing so, the Special Assistant is maintaining a desired level of quality in the draft before it reaches the Principal. The main objective is to limit the need for revision by the Principal. The Special Assistant is responsible for quality assurance. The Special Assistant must provide a draft to the Principal early enough to allow for revisions, clearance by the Principal and for dispatch to relevant recipients. This is valid for correspondence as well as any other written product requiring the Principal's clearance/approval.

All incoming correspondence, based on their subject, has to be vetted and transmitted to the relevant subject experts for a response. The Special Assistant can establish a routing mechanism by which the letter can be tasked for reply to relevant departments/units. A tasking sheet, for example, can be used to identify to whom the correspondence should be sent, what action is required, and by when. These tasking sheets should be logged and are useful to monitor follow-up actions.

INBOX MANAGEMENT

Email management

The inbox of Principals is always flooded, with 100-200 messages a day, making it nearly impossible for them to keep up. Therefore, the Special Assistant is often given the job of managing the emails. In addition to the Special Assistant, the Personal Assistant also can be tasked to review the Principal's inbox. In such cases, a good coordination and separation of duties between the Special Assistant and the Personal Assistant can speed up the email reviewing process. For example, while the PA can focus on emails, containing meeting invitations, Principal's travel arrangements and logistics, and documents for printing, the Special Assistant can instead focus on emails that require an action/decision or need more substantive knowledge.

Depending on the Principal's preference, the Special Assistant and Personal Assistant may be given read-only or full access.

Read Only

A Special Assistant monitors email for urgent matters and raises them with the Principal for action. For more complex issues, the Special Assistant can consult with colleagues and seek advice on the right course of action. Daily meetings are useful to review email with the Principals.

Full Access

Full access to the Principal's inbox allows the Special Assistant to directly act upon received emails, by responding or tasking them on behalf of the Principal. The Special Assistant must be very careful when responding because the recipient will receive messages as if they were from the Principal. Ideally, the Principal and the Special Assistant agree in advance on what kind of emails can be acted upon without previous consultation, what can be delegated or tasked and what the priority is for each.

Reviewing Email/Mail to the Principal

Regardless of the size of the office, the Personal Assistant or other support staff should sort all incoming email/mail to Principal on a daily basis and prepare folders. The Special Assistant should review all the daily emails at the end or early morning each day and:

- Read each email and note the following instructions: *For info / feedback as requested / action underway / forward to relevant colleagues for action / circulation to senior management team*
- Assign each email/mail a log item with actions for follow-up / response / scheduling
- Bring urgent issues verbally to the attention of the Principal
- Acknowledge incoming correspondence, especially invitations, immediately
- Provide relevant information, such as the position of the Principal; clarify why an invitation should be declined, etc.
- Submit draft responses through the front Office for processing and dispatch, unless the correspondence is sensitive/confidential in nature and is to be dispatched only through the Principal's email address
- Make sure all outgoing correspondence is reviewed by the front office and finally by the Personal Assistant or support staff, depending on the size of the office

Most organizations have their Correspondence Manuals that should be used in responding and drafting correspondence.
When the Special Assistant has been away on mission, the backlog of daily email folders should be processed as soon as possible. The Special Assistant should at least scan through the Principal's emails while on mission. Portable devices are handy for this purpose.

Reviewing Incoming Email/mail to the Special Assistant

The Special Assistant also reviews and responds to his/her incoming email on a daily basis. The Special Assistant should have access to a computer and mobile phones, to access the Principal's email account, as well as their own. The Special Assistant follows-up on assigned items and informs the Principal on progress, as appropriate.

Reviewing the Summary of Log Items

Each message and email requiring action should have a log number assigned. All organizations should have a database system to log and archive these items. The Special Assistant reviews the summary of the log items two-three times a week to:

- Verify that items have been correctly assigned
- Reach out to the responsible office for progress on action
- Follow-up on progress on important and/or (time) sensitive mail
- Add additional information on progress in processing log items, for example *completed / representation arranged / already regretted / etc.*

Effective Emails for Busy Principals (and Anyone Else)

Principals are busy people and they can hardly manage their emails. One way to help them is to limit the number of messages they receive through the Special Assistant. Some suggestions below can reduce the number of messages and save their time to focus only on important issues.

When emailing the Principal, the message should be to the point and as short as possible. In general, only emails that are important or require a decision should be addressed to Principals. Principals should be copied only on emails that are important for them. In case of emails addressed to many people and expecting multiple responses, consider bcc'ing the Principal on the initial message and at the end of the conversation when a conclusion is made. Alternatively, just forward the final message to them. Below are guidelines for writing emails to make them easier and faster to read, thus helping Principals to manage their time better.

STEP 1: Lead with a Strong Subject line

Make your headlines clear, actionable and time bound. The formula is simple: **one word + one statement.** See the example below:

- ***APPROVE***: *Please approve Consultant for TEU*
- ***READ&REPLY***: *Draft publication for your review*
- ***For INFO***: *Summary of meeting with DED on GEF, October 4*
- ***URGENT ACTION***: *Action plan for clearance/ Decision on ....by next 1-2 days*

Urgent/Important
Consider using the Urgent/Important principles to determine if a message should reach the Principal and should have the URGENT ACTION in the subject line.
Important: This is easy; if not important/strategic it should not reach the Principal.
Urgent: This is only for important issues that require an immediate action from the Principal to proceed with the business. Use sporadically and only when needed.

STEP 2: Write a one Sentence Summary

Summarize what you want to say in one sentence. If you want an answer, ask the question in the first line of the email. If needed, explain why this request is reaching the Principal instead of Supervisors/Heads of branches/Officers in charge.
Here are some more examples:

- *Please find attached a first draft of the project proposal you requested for your approval. Highlights of this proposal are:*
- *As reflected in the matrix, there are three main issues, which I will be happy to discuss with you further if necessary:*

STEP 3: Be Brief and Specific

- **Smartphone friendly** – Often emails are viewed on Smartphones, especially while traveling. If your message is too long, it will require endless scrolling and might not be read. If what you have to say cannot be said briefly, break your message into paragraphs and use headers, so the reader can get to the relevant parts more easily.
- **The call to action has to be clear** – Executive readers want to read quickly, take action and move on. So be obvious about what you want the take-away to be.

Writing for the Web

A Special Assistant might be asked to monitor the organization's online content. Writing for the Web can differ tremendously from traditional writing. In fact, people read and consume text differently on the screen compared to the printed page. Similarly, writing online content is different from writing for a print publication.

A print document is a complete entity, and the user is focused on the entire set of information. The computer screen displays about a third of a printed page, so context is lacking. Material needs to be 'chunked' into multiple linked pages, and each chunk needs to make sense on its own. Reading in print is passive, but reading online is an active process. Print readers are more likely to analyze material carefully and sequentially. Online, however, people tend to jump around, read things out of order or context, and zero in quickly on desired bits of content.

Print readers, who can flip pages and deduce the context, are more patient. Online readers are not willing to read long pages or click many links to understand the point; the message needs to be crisp and easily grasped. A print document is linear; each section serves as a stepping-stone for the next. Online readers can enter a site at any page and move between pages, so each page needs to stand alone. It also needs to be linked to background or explanatory information on other pages (IFAD 2013).

When preparing online content, the Special Assistant can follow some of these tips:

Know your audience
At the planning stage, it is important to collect specific information about the target users for your web content. The goal is to collect as much information on who are the target users, why they should read the content and their computer set-up (computer or mobile device)

Assume the reader knows nothing about your content and put yourself in the position of someone who has no knowledge about your organization. Therefore, it is useful to:

- Put all statements in context
- Avoid jargon, which could alienate readers
- Write out all acronyms the first time they appear on the page
- Read text aloud to make sure it is clear and not too long
- After writing text, put it away for a couple of days and then re-read and edit if necessary

Assume each page is the first page a user encounters
Users rarely begin reading web content from the home page. Most readers will come to the page from a search engine or an external link. Therefore:

- Make sure each page has enough context to act as a stand-alone: address one topic cohesively on each page, and give each page a clear and concise heading
- Provide context for all statements
- Link to further resource material to provide additional context

Make text easy to scan
Online readers generally scan text, looking for key words or interesting points. To make sure your web content is easy to scan:

- Start with the conclusion and a short summary of the content
- Use bulleted and numbered lists to draw attention
- Make sure each paragraph contains one main idea, and limit paragraphs to no more 100 words
- Use bold sparingly, only to highlight key information and concepts

Start with the conclusion
Put main ideas, conclusions and important points at the beginning. Few people read entire web pages – if you put the most important points at the end, most visitors may never see them. Avoid a rambling first paragraph!

Use lists
Remember that Web readers are scanning for snippets of information. Lists are easy to scan and understand because they do not have to be read word by word:

- Use numbered lists when the sequence of entries is important, unnumbered lists when it is not
- Put no more than nine items in a list
- Avoid lists of more than two levels: primary and secondary

Keep vocabulary simple, concise and precise
Simple words are helpful to readers with less proficiency in English and to those who quickly scan the webpage. Convoluted writing and complex words are even harder to understand online. Choose words that are short, common and unlikely to be misread. Edit out the superfluous and get to the point. Read the text out loud. Spoken language is more direct than written language, and hearing your words spoken might reveal awkward or convoluted sentences.

Use short paragraphs and sentences
It is hard to read long, dense paragraphs on a computer monitor. Even a relatively short paragraph of 100 words looks like a lot of text on the screen. Short paragraphs help readers find what they are looking for and make writing easier to scan. A reader looking for a specific piece of information is likely to scan, but unlikely to fully read an entire article.

Write captivating headlines and titles
Headlines and titles are critical – they determine whether readers decide to invest more time reading the content. Successful headlines tell the gist of the story in a few powerful words and catch the reader's interest. Vague or misleading headlines put off readers. To write an effective headline:

- Make sure you thoroughly understand the content so you can give it an accurate headline
- Think about the most important point in the content and incorporate it into the headline
- Identify the tone of the content and make the headline compatible with it. The tone should also be appropriate for the audience and true to the organization's identity, standards, value and voice
- Keep headlines short. Summarizing a story should not require many words.

Use subheadings
Subheadings are short headings that break up the text every few paragraphs, making it easier to scan. This helps readers find the parts of the text that interest them most, and it makes the primary topics of the article stand out with just a quick glance. Make subheadings bold so they are easily visible. Good subheadings:

- Give readers a glimpse of the content
- Organize the content into readable chunks
- Tell a story that makes it possible to grasp the gist of the content quickly

Use bold to highlight key concepts
However, do not go overboard. Use it sparingly, for words and phrases, not sentences. Bold is more effective and easily scanned when arranged vertically, such as by bolding the first word or two in each item of a bullet list. Too much bold scattered throughout **text is confusing.**

Include links
Article text is a great place to link to other pages within the site and to other websites. Links allow the user to scan the contents of a page and select relevant and useful information. They also help to guide the reader through the document. Think of linking as the quickest means to get the user to the most relevant information. It is important to use them correctly and write them in a helpful way. Do not let links become a distraction.

Avoid jargon
Avoid jargon and specialized or technical terms. Using common terminology makes the text easy for all your visitors to understand. It even makes comprehension easier for those who know the jargon, as they do not have to slow down to ascertain the exact meaning.

Use acronyms sparingly
Avoid the temptation to use acronyms as shorthand – the 'alphabet-soup' look is ugly and hard to read. If you must use acronyms:

- Make sure all terms are written out in full, followed by the acronym in parentheses, the first time they are mentioned in the text
- Avoid acronyms in headings
- Try using a synonym instead of an acronym, such as 'the Goals' (instead of 'SDGs') on second reference to the Sustainable Development Goals

Write clear captions
All photographs, illustrations and tables need identifying captions. Do not forget to include credits and copyright symbols where appropriate.

Avoid extraneous information
Writing well for the web means taking advantage of the options the web offers, but without calling attention to the web. 'Click here', 'follow this link' and 'this Web site' are a few self-referential terms to avoid. The standard protocols for identifying links and sites have been in use long enough that explanations are not necessary (IFAD 2013).

PART II - OTHER POSSIBLE FUNCTIONS

Liaison

The Special Assistant liaises with all parts of the organization vertically and horizontally, often serving as the eyes and ears of the Principal. The Special Assistant is aware of the division/office and organizational dynamics, new trends and developments in various areas. Thus, the Principal can be brought up to speed on issues not immediately at hand and be made aware of possible pitfalls, bottlenecks or upcoming urgencies. This can include substantive issues dealt with by other departments, instructions and guidance from the Executive Management, staff relations issues, best practices and lessons learned, including from outside the organization. The Special Assistant needs to be able to interact confidently with superiors, subordinates and colleagues of equal rank, both internally and externally. The Special Assistant also liaises with a variety of external stakeholders, which can include donor governments, host country representatives, civil society, international and local Non-Governmental Organizations, international organizations and the private sector. The Liaison function can be grouped into three categories Ascending, Descending and External.

Ascending Liaison

The Ascending liaison function involves supporting the Principal by providing advice on political, administrative and policy matters. The scope of this advice can involve any aspects of the organization's activities. Special Assistant's advice can relate to daily routine matters, such as how to respond to letters, speech key messages, report's main points etc. However, it can also involve more strategic issues, such as how to deal with a corporate priority, position to take on a specific issue on behalf of the organization or the design of a cost-efficient administrative process.

Ideally, the Special Assistant should be the Principal's ears on the ground. Principals, especially in large organizations with thousands of staff members, have limited time and will often only focus on strategic issues. Therefore, they need someone to monitor all main activities and their latest developments; this can include political, humanitarian or administrative matters. In this way, Principals will always stay updated and decide when to intervene or whom to delegate (Wesslau, 2013).

The Special Assistant must have a deep understanding of the monitored matters and keep a broad network of contacts to consult for more information. Keeping abreast of latest development for the Principals means also connecting the dots, analyzing events and understanding how they relate to the organization's mandate. The Principal can be easily overwhelmed by information that may or may not be relevant. It is up to the Special Assistant to filter and present only what is relevant and important.

Descending Liaison

The Descending liaison function consists of establishing and maintaining contacts with the rest of the organization. This can include providing advice to other departments in the organization and acting as a link between the Principal and the rest of the organization. The latter task can be particularly important in large organizations or complex peace operations where the Head of Organization's contact with all its staff members is limited. Normally the organization's Chief of Staff should provide this connection, but in its absence, the Special Assistant can carry out this function. The descending liaison function can entail translating the Principal's strategic vision into operational guidance to other staff members. To carry out this task effectively, the Special Assistant needs to have credibility and authority within the organization; this derives not only from professionalism and integrity, but also from access and proximity to the Principal. If there is access, the Special Assistant is able to have a solid understanding of the Principal's strategic vision and thoughts on specific issues (Wesslau, 2013).

The proper functioning of an organization requires that the Principal is responsive to requests for guidance. The Special Assistant can fulfill a coordination role by representing the Principal in meetings, providing guidance to staff members, and responding to requests for advice. Sometimes the information is in other parts of the organization and the custodian maybe unknown to most. It is a good practice for the Special Assistant to establish a solid internal network with the various Principals in the organization, their teams and respective Special Assistants, if available.

Special Assistants' coordination meetings can be very useful in sharing and seeking information on Principals' travels or latest developments in focus areas. Large organizations can have out-posted offices scattered around the globe. These offices might lack proper communication flow from the headquarters. In the absence of a corporate liaison system, the Special Assistant can ensure that out-posted colleagues are briefed about the latest strategic decisions or policy generated at Headquarters. On the other hand, this channel of communication can also benefit the Principal with specific and more precise local updates from the regions.

External Liaison

The External liaison function consists of interfacing with all stakeholders and partners external to the organization. External partners can include Members States, donor countries, Members of the organization's governing bodies, host country and local authorities, Non-Governmental Organizations, other international organizations and the private sector. When engaging with external interlocutors, all staff members are representing and speaking on behalf of the organization. Therefore, it is imperative that all disclosed information be in line with the organization's mandate, positions and values. Representing the organization requires good communication, interpersonal and diplomatic skills. The purpose of these engagements with external partners is not only to establish solid working relationships for the matters at hand but also for possible future collaboration.

The Special Assistant is fully involved in liaising with external partners, representing the Principal on various occasions. These can include interactions with local authorities to convey and receive messages, share assessments, defend policies and positions, and gain information about local developments. The Special Assistant should have a solid understanding of the situation and political context of the country, including the local culture. It is also necessary to understand the larger international context, in particular the interests and stakes of regional states and other actors. Relations with the host government can be particularly delicate and complicated as organization can be dependent on the host government for legitimacy and support. Relations with political parties, the media, require tact and political judgement. The Special Assistant may be involved in managing these sensitive relationships. (Wesslau 2013).

The Special Assistant might need to support the Principal in interacting with Members States. These relations are instrumental to building political support, ensuring organization funding and carrying out the mandate. Certain Principals can be required to brief Member States in different fora. In the United Nations, the Security Council, the Executive Boards and other governing bodies are the main official fora for regular reporting to Member States. Regular briefings establish a resourceful channel of communication between the organization and its governing members. Member States use the opportunity of these briefings to provide political input and strategic guidance to the organization. The Principal uses these briefings to present assessments and policy recommendations, to provide funding requirements and to share best practices and lessons learned from the organization. The Special Assistant will support Principals and their interlocutors in preparing briefing material, thematic reports and talking points. (Wesslau, 2013).

The External liaison also involves outreach and public information. In the absence of a dedicated public information office, the Special Assistant can help the Principal to project a positive image of the organization through speeches or public statements. The right messaging can influence the behavior of key actors and, consequently, result in a positive outcome for the organization's mandate. The Special Assistant can provide advice on the strategic and tactical aspects of outreach including key messages, right tone and political pitfalls. (Wesslau, 2013).

In particular, the Special Assistant must be vigilant of any statement, message or decision that could have negative implications for the Principal's reputation or worsen political relations with Member States and other partners. Finally, The Special Assistant, on behalf of the Principal, is involved in the distribution of outreach and advocacy information. This might include managing the Principal's social media networks and messaging such as Twitter, Facebook, and other platforms.

Support to Efficiency and Effectiveness

Principals have broad managerial responsibility within their department or for the whole organization. Depending on the availability of specific administrative officers, the Special Assistant can offer support for this task. The aim for most United Nations offices is to run offices and activities that are efficient and effective. This means doing more with less, implementing cost-saving initiatives and attracting the right skills for the right job. There are three main categories with regard to support for efficiency and effectiveness: managing financial resources, managing human resources, and general administration.

Financial Resources

The Principal is responsible for how money is allocated and spent. This requires access to updated information at all times, which the Special Assistant can help with. There are various enterprise resource management systems used in the United Nations, the most common today being UMOJA. The Special Assistant should share the same access privileges as the Principal to be able to acquire real time information and to allow the Principal to take informed decisions. In certain cases, the Special Assistant can also act on behalf of the Principal, within the agreed limits, to certify and confirm operational transactions. The Special Assistant must be knowledgeable on all applicable policies, procedures, rules and regulations, and advise when necessary. Finally, the Special Assistant can assist in preparing the department budget and the accompanying justification and documentation, monitor and control budget allotments and address any issues.

Human Resources

The Special Assistant can be required to oversee the recruitment of staff in an appropriate and timely manner, to provide staff briefings and orientation regarding all of the operational areas and to provide advice on staff relations issues including career development and training. In addition, the Principal is responsible for monitoring and reporting on the department's performance and results, as well as for reviewing department structures and operations. These tasks can all be delegated to the Special Assistant. Additional technical tasks can also include updating job descriptions prior to budget preparations so they are in line with the office management plan.

Recruitment Made Easy – And Fair

Recruitments can be cumbersome and take a lot of time. A few tips and suggestions to speed up this process are listed below. It is possible to know well in advance when someone is due to retire. Therefore, there is plenty of time to check whether the job description is up to date or needs revision based on current and future staffing requirements and skillset needed – including options such as abolishment of the position or Step 1 below before launching a job opening. Where the position is to be advertised, it is good practice to do so 12 months prior to the retirement date.

Step 1: Review/revise/prepare the Job Opening

Wherever possible, use a generic job description with limited changes. If the changes are less than 30%, then there is no need for a full re-classification of the position to take place. New positions (and changes to existing positions) need to be translated, which takes time, so do limit the changes to those that are essential. Normally three competencies are needed, one of which has to be Professionalism and this is the only one where you can add aspects related to the technical skills you are seeking. For managerial positions, two additional managerial competencies are needed. The most relevant competencies related to the tasks of the position have to be chosen.

Take specific care in terms of the three criteria - including desirable criteria - as they are the only criteria you can use to reduce the sometimes very large number of applicants to a longlist (all those that meet the minimum criteria) and then to an initial shortlist (those who also meet the desirable criteria) who should be invited to sit for the written test.

Evaluation Criteria

Education: Be very clear about the type of educational background that is needed for the position. If you make it too specific, you risk not being able to include qualified candidates with a slightly different degree or to attract a sufficient number of qualified candidates. If you make it too broad, you might end up with 300-400 applicants to evaluate.

Experience: Include both minimum requirements (e.g. 7 years of relevant (and increasingly responsible) experience for a P4 in a specified area of work) and desirable aspects. International experience or working experience in developing countries can be a minimum requirement or a desirable one – experience from a specific country or region is normally a desirable aspect.

Languages: We have standard text for this (fluency in English), but given our work, do consider the need for French, Spanish, Russian, Arabic and/or Chinese. Again, this can be a minimum requirement or a desirable criterion.

Do not wait until the Job Opening is closed before reviewing the applications for three reasons:

1) You need to make sure you have enough qualified candidates before the Job Opening closes, so that you can extend the deadline if need be (much faster than having to re-advertise the position later in the process).
2) You can choose a rostered candidate as soon as s/he applies, so if the perfect candidate applies on day 1, you can (in theory at least), select this person and close the Job Opening.
3) Going through 300+ applications is daunting and hence we often tend to postpone this, which delays the process. If you go through them once a week, you should be ready to create the shortlist very soon after the Job Opening closes.

If you have not followed this advice and have hundreds of applications, then start with a review of the rostered candidates. If satisfied by one (or more) of them, meeting the evaluation criteria, then you can select that person without the need to go through the technical test and the interview process (since s/he has already been through such a process for the same level of job, under the same job code and has demonstrated her/his competency.) The advantage of choosing a rostered candidate is the speed of the process. The disadvantage is that no other candidate will be able to become rostered through this specific Job Opening and you may miss other qualified candidates. These pros and cons have to be carefully weighed up. More information on how to evaluate applicants is available here:
https://careers.un.org/lbw/attachments/Inspira/At_a_Glance/HM4EvaluatingApplicantsAtaGlance.pdf

Step 2: Review the longlist

This is best done by the interview panel. Use the desirable criteria as outlined in the Job Opening to reduce the longlist to a short-list. Candidates may then be invited to take a written test to establish their technical competence. Make sure this list has a reasonable geographical and gender balance.

Step 3: Administer the written test

The interview panel should agree on the questions for the test, the scoring guide and the pass mark in advance. All responses should be blind-scored. See Annex XIV for a standard text to be sent out to candidates invited to sit the written test.

Step 4: Create the shortlist for the interviews

This is, generally speaking, straight forward: those who passed the test are shortlisted for the interviews. However, we do wish to ensure a reasonable geographical and gender balance also at this stage.

Step 5: Conduct the interviews

Decide on a date for the interviews that is suits all members of the Interview Panel. The panel should consist of at least three staff members serving at the same or higher grade as the position advertised, at least one female and one male and at least one from outside the Department. All panel members must have completed the relevant training course such as Competency Based Interviewing and Selection Skills. All prospective panel members should inform the Panel Chair of their prior knowledge of the candidates and any potential conflict of interest that might prevent them from objectively assessing the candidates. See Annex XIV for a standard text to be sent out to candidates invited to the interview.

The interview focuses on the competencies listed in the Job Opening. Examples of questions for each competency can be found at http://www.umid.info/united-nations-competency-based-interview-questions but you are also encouraged to make up your own based on the training you have received. Please ensure that they closely relate to the description of the competencies in the Job Opening.

Step 6: Evaluate the candidates and submit the panel report

It is recommended that the report is written immediately after the interview. This report is the conclusions the panel has reached after the interview. Provide a balanced length of reports for all candidates. Touch on positive and negative indicators of competency. Show evidence and do not make assumptions. Use the assessment criteria as the benchmark rather than other candidates' responses. In the conclusion, explain why the candidate was selected, or not, based on evidence.

While the report is being finalized, ensure that you obtain references for all candidates. Candidates with unsatisfactory references (with sufficient evidence) should be removed from the recommended list – with an explanation in the report – so that they are not rostered. Ideally, you should aim for a minimum of three recommended candidates in case one or two decline the offer. If you have less, you are allowed to return to longlist/shortlist to see if additional candidates should be tested/interviewed.

Step 7: Select the candidate

Once the report has been cleared by the relevant Central Review Body, the Hiring Manager can select the best suited, taking into account gender and geographical distribution within the Department/Organization. For additional guidance and tips

See https://inspira.un.org/psc/PUNA1J/EMPLOYEE/HRMS/c/ROLE_EMPLOYEE.UN_ADHOC_DOCS.GBL

Flexible Work Arrangements

Principals may make the decision to use flexible work arrangements as a tool to enhance productivity and efficiency as well as flexibility to the staff member. There are four flexible work arrangements:

Option 1: Staggered Working Hours
Staff members are expected to be present during a core period of the working day. The core period will be set at each duty station. Staff must complete the balance of working hours for each day before, after, or partly after, the core period.

Option 2: Compressed Work Schedule
All the hours that would normally have been worked during a period of ten working days are compressed into nine working days by distributing among these nine days the hours that would otherwise have been worked on the tenth day. This redistribution of normal working hours allows staff members, every other week, to take off the last day of the normal workweek.

Option 3: Scheduled Break for External Learning
Staff members wishing to attend courses relevant to their professional development at universities or other institutions of learning may request breaks of up to three hours per day for a maximum of two days per week. The hours spent away from work during a particular week must be made up during that week.

Option 4: Work Away from the Office (Telecommuting)
Where consistent with the nature of the work involved, staff members may spend up to two days per week working from an alternative work site, provided they have access to the necessary equipment and may always be reached by telephone or e-mail.

To improve the reliability and accuracy of the data for next year, all staff should be recording their flexible work arrangements in the time management module in Umoja. More detailed information is available on the FWA page on the HR Portal.

FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS

General Administration

In terms of general administration, the Personal Assistant or other support staff may be better placed to provide support. However, the Special Assistant, responsible for the smooth functioning of the front office and the department, must be knowledgeable about the requirements and needs in terms of office space, stationery, travel requirements, claims, staff benefits, procurement processes etc. A new Principal might need advice on any of these issues that could be specific to the organization.

Office space management is important for staff morale and productivity; the Principal must provide a proper working environment for the staff. For this task the Special Assistant should, aided by administration staff when and where available, track the life period for computer replacements, place procurement orders for stationary, and manage the asset inventory. While equipment assigned to staff is their responsibility, ultimately the Principal has to respond if assets are missing or misused. The Special Assistant keeps the inventory and advises the staff regarding the procedures for use of material.

Office space is important; it is a managerial decision whether open space or closed offices are used. While there are United Nations' policies on office sizes according to staff grades, the Principal has the final word on how to allocate office space in a department. Ideally, staff working tightly together should stay closer to each other. Access to light in shared spaces also has to be considered. The Special Assistant can support this process by reaching out to competent partners - such as the medical unit - to run a workspace assessment.

Telephone and Related Cost Saving Measures

General guidance on cost saving measures for telephone calls could include:

- Be aware of Dial patterns for national and international calls
- Use of Direct internal dial numbers
- Use of Intermission codes
- Use of Skype and other VOIP (Voice over Internet) such as Facetime, Line, Viber etc.

Various organizations are adopting Web conferencing software such as GoToMeeting or WebEx. Such Web-hosted services allow online meeting, desktop sharing and video conferencing which enable the user to meet with other computer users, customers, clients or colleagues via the Internet in real time. Staff should be encouraged to use such software as the primary way of communicating with out-posted offices via the Internet.

Roaming For Official Telephones

Costs incurred by official telephone bills per month can be dangerously high if not regulated. The main reason is normally is 'roaming charges'. The phone should not be left on roaming throughout for checking emails. Staff should be encouraged to activate roaming for a short while to let all emails download only. Then deactivate the roaming and respond to them. In most countries, there is no need to use roaming, as wireless is available everywhere, in that case switch off the roaming completely.

Tips to reduce your mobile phone charges

These tips have been collected to help manage and control call and phone data usage. They can be applied in your duty station or abroad.

1. Use WI-Fi – It's free

Wi-Fi hotspots are available in airports, hotels, meeting venues, restaurants, and for some countries in public spaces. Take advantage of the available Wi-Fi hotspots everywhere by checking on your phone to see which networks are available in your area. Also, look out for the Wi-Fi symbols. Using Wi-Fi, you can:

- Call and text through Wi-Fi using applications like Skype, WhatsApp, Viber, Line, Hangout, etc.
- Set your phone to only update/receive notifications, for applications and software, when connected to Wi-Fi

Remember when using Wi-Fi abroad to turn off data roaming, otherwise you will still be charged.

2. Choose the most cost effective network partner

Different roaming networks charge different rates. Selecting the most preferred and cost effective roaming network will provide the convenience at the best cost. Your provider should have a list of the most cost effective networks to use their roaming service.

3. Use email

Use email as your primary mode of communication during international travel.

4. Minimizing calling and texting

Minimize non internet based voice calls and text messaging as the roaming charges for both are normally very high.

5. Restrict applications connecting to internet

Most smartphone based applications such as GPS, Facebook, Blackberry messenger, weather widgets, Google Maps etc. or any other instant messaging applications continuously consume data even when you are not using them. Keep these applications switched off or set them to only activate when on a Wi-Fi connection and turn them back on only when needed.

6. Be smart about updates

Turn off all automatic updates set on the phone as these use data and could lead to high data charges. Change your settings so that your phone only updates when connected to Wi-Fi.

COST SAVING TIPS

Use of Printers and Paper Related Cost Saving Measures

Staff must be conscientious of the use of paper and printer to avoid waste. All printers should be set as default to print two side pages. For long documents, there is the option of printing as booklet, (four pages per sheet) presenting an additional option for paper saving.

To set Booklet printing
Print > Printer Properties > select booklet from Print type > OK > Print
Staff must ensure settings are correct in their Word, Excel, and PowerPoint software to avoid unnecessary printing. Print only the pages with text on them and set printing area in Excel to avoid empty columns, etc.

To set Print Area in Excel
Select area in the document to be printed > Page Layout tab > Print Area Icon > Set print area
Color prints must be limited to strictly necessary, for official documents or publications.

Security

It is important that all staff is aware of the security situation in the country. Staff should be encouraged to seek advice from your resident security office (DSS), learn the procedures in your particular duty station, and join the various alert systems such as SMS alerts or Security Advisory messages.

Warden System

In order to facilitate the coordination of the security arrangements, information and instructions, a number of internationally and nationally recruited staff should be appointed to act as Wardens and Deputy Wardens. In case of an emergency, the Warden and Deputies should be able, subject to proper functioning of communication systems, to reach staff members, their spouses and their eligible dependents within one hour of the emergency.

Warden's responsibilities include:

- Be knowledgeable of the staff and their family members in their group. This includes exact location of where they live, together with contact numbers
- Having contact details of staff in their place of home leave, to including their private e-mail addresses
- Linking the security office (DSS) and staff members and their dependents with updated information

Coordinate the Front Office Team

Very often, the Special Assistant is not alone in supporting the Principal. Typically, there is always at least a Personal Assistant and a Special Assistant. This constitutes the so-called "Front Office" of the department/division. Often the Special Assistant has managerial responsibility to ensure the smooth functioning of the front office. This includes acting as first and second reporting officer for the front office staff.

Front Office

Depending on the size and mandate of the department/division, the front office size and composition can vary. A front office should perform functions like correspondence management, principals' calendar management, travel arrangements, administrative support, and protocol. The remaining functions are generally separated evenly among the team members and based on individual backgrounds and experiences. It is often useful to compose such teams with members bringing in a mix of expertise, genders, cultural backgrounds and nationalities, including staff from the host country. In cases where multiple Special Assistants are supporting one Principal, it is useful to divide the portfolios and have a clear division of labor to ensure smooth office management. Moreover, there should be a back-up system so when individual staff members are away, others can take over their duties. This system requires a working environment that promotes teamwork, information sharing and commitment to the common goal.

Usually, staff in the front office work long hours and are under constant pressure, as there is little margin for error. The Special Assistant needs to ensure:

- Exemplary adherence to UN ethics, rules and regulations, professional conduct and office courtesy
- Adequate stand-in arrangements are in place when team members request training, annual leave and/or stand-in arrangements that could be in place in the event of unforeseen (uncertified / sick) leave
- Workflow / sequential processing of incoming / outgoing correspondence functions without blockages – and the office encourages continuous improvement of work-flow processes
- Issues are resolved through liaison on behalf of the team with the rest of the office
- The team is aware of the need for and enabled to share information efficiently and effectively
- The team is empowered and accountable

Teamwork is paramount between the Personal Assistant and the Special Assistant. Those two roles complement each other.

The Front Office's Structure

As mentioned, a basic structure of a front office includes a Special Assistant and at least one Personal Assistant. Depending on the department's size, the front office can grow exponentially as workload increases. The following are examples of ideal front office structures with staff and functions.

Minimal office with one Special Assistant and one Personal Assistant

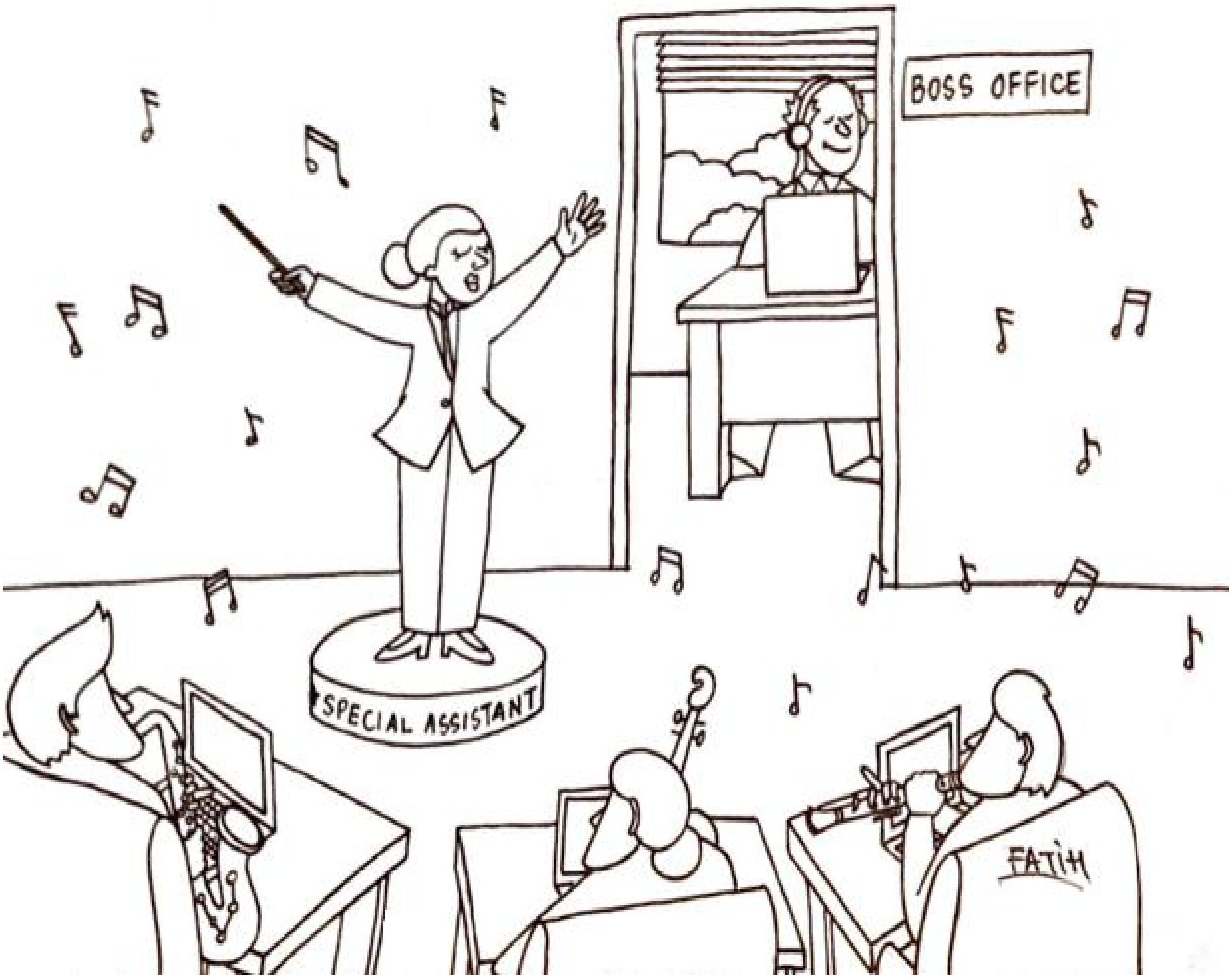
- Special Assistant: Substantive advice and support, correspondence management, documents review
- Personal Assistant: Administrative and logistical support, meeting scheduling

Mid-Size Office with one Special Assistant and one Personal Assistant and other support staff

- Special Assistant: coordination of the Front Office, substantive support to Principal, quality assurance before Principal's clearance
- Personal Assistant: administrative and logistical support to Principal
- Additional support staff: correspondence management, documents editing and distribution, archiving
- Additional support staff: travel management, visas, logistics, Information Technology

Complex Size Office with multiple Special Assistants, one Personal Assistant and other support staff

- Multiple Special Assistants: each one will cover a specific theme or geographical regional, including travel with the Principal
- Personal Assistant: Principal's calendar management, Principal's personal administrative support
- Additional support staff: correspondence management, documents editing and distribution, archiving,
- Additional support staff: travel management, including visas and logistics, Information Technology, meetings and venue arrangements, maintain department's event calendar
- Additional support staff: knowledge management, website management, social media



FRONT OFFICE

Planning

In the absence of a planning officer, the Special Assistant can be asked to support the Principal in preparing and finalizing the department's work plan. This entails being responsible for program budget planning, monitoring and reporting, as well as general support and quality assurance to program budget management.

The planning in the United Nations system is a complex and indispensable practice. It requires coordination and strong communication among many actors. There are various different approaches to planning, which typically follows a series of steps however. Generally, these steps are preparation, objective setting, analysis, design, implementation and evaluation (United Nations 2012b).

Preparation

During preparation, answers to the following questions need to be sought: Where are we now? Where should we go? How do we get there? Who should be involved in the planning process? Could we benefit from outside input, such as experts and facilitators? How can transparency be upheld and outside input used productively without bogging down the planning process? How much time should be allocated for the planning process? How staff involved should divide their time between planning and other duties? What are the cost implications?

Objective Setting

It is then time to define a mission statement. During objective setting, the mission statement must derive from the organization's vision or mandate. A mission statement should contain three elements: the organization's purpose, its business, and its values. A vision statement should present a guiding image of what success will look like. The broad direction expressed in the mission and vision statements is further elaborated through a detailed set of goals and objectives. A useful standard for setting objectives, also mentioned elsewhere in this manual, is the "SMART" criteria. Objectives should be Specific, Measurable, Assignable, Realistic and Time-Bound.

Analysis

After the overall goals are defined, it is necessary to gather more information and develop plans on how to achieve these objectives. Depending on the organization's nature, analyzing the context in which they operate is a key component of making sound plans. These can include a stakeholder analysis, conflict analysis, problem analysis, etc. The SWOT analysis is a useful tool in identifying different courses of action based on the preliminary research of the organization's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. The main purpose of SWOT analyses is to provide an analytical basis for strategies that reflect reality by guaranteeing a maximum fit between the external factors of the environment and internal factors of the organization. Strategies based on this analytical model ensure that outside opportunities are exploited by inside strengths, while threats are countered and weaknesses minimized. As a result, it will emerge more clearly, if, how, and when the organization should engage in a specific activity (United Nations 2012c).

Design

In the design phase, the objectives and analysis are combined into plans. Strategy formulation must take into account strategic alternatives derived from the analysis phase. Once overall strategies have been developed, corresponding work plans need to be devised, starting at the top of the hierarchies mentioned above, down to the level of operations and individual actions. The "critical path method" is useful in sequencing and prioritizing actions and "scenario planning". In essence, it helps in listing every activity required for the completion of a project, the time required to complete the job, and its immediate prerequisite tasks. A graph is drawn in the sequence of which activity needs to be completed in order for the next one to commence. The critical path is the longest path from start to finish and indicates the minimum time required to finish the project. This can help in identifying bottlenecks and speeding up jobs along the critical path (United Nations 2012c).

Implementation

Responsibility for overseeing the implementation of plans must be clearly assigned. Besides clarifying the supervisory responsibilities, regular reporting duties must also be established. Reports on the progress of the implementation of plans (or lack thereof) are important initial indicators for evaluating the success of a mission.

Evaluation

The final phase of planning is the evaluation. This is when, through regular reporting, plans are confirmed to be fit for purpose or judged to need adaptation and updating.

In essence, the Special Assistant will ensure cohesion between the organization's mandate and the workplace for the Principal's own department. There are various templates for a good work plan. In general, they should contain objectives, secession indicators, timeframe, and responsible person.

When drafting the work plan, the Special Assistant, who must be aware of the results-based budgeting and planning, must remind all contributors that the department's work plan is a strategic document, not a unit or personal work plan. In fact, it has to contain strategic objectives and concrete ways on how results will be measured. In concrete terms, the work plan should not be just a "shopping list" of activities, but rather focus on results and outcome. A more detailed, activity oriented work plan is instead more fit for a lower level plan, such as a unit's or an individual's work plans. Instead, the work plan should list what the expected results are that the department is aiming to achieve in order to fulfill part of the organization's mandate.

The timeframe can be indicated by month or quarter. What is important is that the timeframe be realistic and achievable. At times, milestones can be identified for the work plan to take stock of the progress and evaluate progress against results. Finally, each goal and expected result should have a dedicated responsible person who will monitor and report on progress. These responsibilities must be duly recorded on the personal work plan to improve accountability. The Special Assistant can also prepare the end of year report, stating how the department has deliberated according to the targets set and results expected.

PLANNING

Protocol

Principals interact often with Heads of States, parliamentarians, ambassadors and other high-level country officials. The Special Assistant must know the protocol on how to interact with them and advise the Principal and the rest of the team if a protocol officer is not available. Following the protocol rules ensures all delegates are treated the same way, avoiding discrimination and embarrassment for the organization the Principal represents. Particularly important, for the Special Assistant and the Principal are the rules on making introductions, organizing visits of dignitaries and forms of address.

Introducing People

"The purpose of making introductions is to exchange names between people so that a conversation can follow. For a formal occasion, the traditional 'Mrs. Smith, may I present Mr. Jones?' is used internationally. When making introductions, honour is recognized by the name spoken first. Courtesy gives honour to those who are older, higher in rank, titled, have a professional status, or are female. To make the introductions more pleasant, tell each individual something about the other person. This encourages the conversation to continue." (U.S. State Dept., 2005). The Special Assistants, when introducing the dignitaries to the Principals, should use their full names or titles. Normally the name of the Principal comes first: "Ms. Smith (Principal) let me introduce you to Ambassador White from the Republic of Arcadia".

The standard accepted in the United Nations is the term 'Excellency' to refer to Heads of State, Heads of Government, Members of Cabinet, Heads of International Organizations, including the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and Ambassadors, in written correspondence as well as in verbal salutations. This simple solution has avoided many protocol dilemmas and potential mistakes on how to address VIPs.

INTRODUCING PEOPLE

Dignitaries Visits

Nations officials and high-level dignitaries from all parts of the world who wish to acquaint themselves with the United Nations work (United Nations 2013). Members of the Security Council and or other governing bodies of the United Nations pay regular visits to field out-posted offices to understand first-hand how the organization functions. International figures from the political, humanitarian and entertainment arena, such as goodwill ambassadors, who want to partake in the work of the United Nations, also visit. Each visit draws the attention of the media; therefore, a successful visit will result in a boost in the organization's visibility.

In many ways, the practice of protocol is much more complex in a United Nations out-posted office than at its Headquarters for the simple reason that the United Nations Secretariat and the offices in major duty stations like Geneva, Vienna or Nairobi have been in existence for decades and rigorous and well-tested systems are in place. The host country, the local authorities, the security apparatus and the press corps have all worked together with the United Nations Office of Protocol on the organization of high-level visits so many times that it is unlikely that something could fall through the cracks. In addition, the presence of the Member States missions accredited to the United Nations provides great support in receiving and organizing the visit of dignitaries from their country (UNITAR 2013).

This is not so in the field offices where new United Nations offices open up on a regular basis. There is not always an Embassy of the visiting dignitary to provide support to the visit. There is rarely a "baseline" for a scenario to outline the steps required to organize the protocol of those high-level visits. At the same time, the newer the office, the more chance it has to receive the visit of high-level dignitaries. A protocol "faux-pas" will attract attention and these days, with the speed of the circulation of information, an incident will take a life of its own. It can linger for weeks on the front page of newspapers, internet chat rooms and bloggers and affect the image of the United Nations worldwide. Any breach in protocol arrangements for the Secretary-General and any dignitaries is a reflection on the standing of the United Nations and can create embarrassment for the United Nations and the country hosting the visit.

The political tools of diplomacy and mediation lie at the core of the work of the United Nations to help nations prevent and resolve conflicts peacefully. Detailed and precise preparations are fundamental to the success of visits. This is particularly true when providing the right environment and treatment of dignitaries is conducive to a successful meeting or negotiation. It is essential for visits by the Secretary-General and other dignitaries, from within and outside the United Nations, to be planned and organized with the utmost attention. No details should be left to chance. A well-planned visit will give a positive image of the managerial and political competence of the mission. Similarly, if the protocol aspects of such visits go astray the credibility of the mission will immediately be at stake (UNITAR 2013).

The Special Assistant can support protocol officers in various ways. In addition to the standard protocol aspects of a high-level visit, they can be tasked with the responsibility of getting visas, obtaining overflight clearance, arranging hotel reservations and car convoys. They might have to oversee the social events of the Mission and coordinate with the Host Country on seating for State functions. They will probably be involved in the coordination of Town Hall meetings, logistics of press conferences, etc. The protocol officer will need to work relentlessly to ensure that all details are covered. It is quite an arduous task where planning, organizational and interpersonal skills are essential. A good practice is to prepare a detailed visit schedule. This document should be shared ahead of time with all relevant partners and include location, purpose of the visit, time and logistical arrangement. This must also include the accommodation and flights details. Great flexibility is advisable, as very often visit plans tend to change at very short notice.

Forms of Address

The multicultural aspect of the United Nations calls for standardization, simplicity and homogeneity in the forms of addresses. Generally, the style of addressing a person is determined by his or her status as well as the relationship between that person and the speaker or writer.

Formal communication between parties is contingent on the status of those involved and the circumstances. In general, among the many instances where formal communication is appropriate, it is prudent to utilize this kind of correspondence when addressing a Head of State/Government, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Permanent Representative of a Member State, or Observer of a non-member State.

One common form of formal communication in the United Nations is the "Note Verbale," This formal letter is generally used to address a Permanent Mission, Permanent Representative/Observer, or Ministry/Minister of Foreign Affairs. As the working languages of the Secretariat, French and English are used (British spelling in English). A sample template is available in ANNEX X.

Letter Opening and Closing

Formal letters Opening

The first formal letter sent should read, "I have the honour to …" except in letters from Under/Assistant Secretaries-General to permanent representatives, which read "I am directed by the Secretary-General to …" or "On behalf of the Secretary-General, I have the honour to…"

Formal letters closes: "Please accept, Excellency (Sir, Madam), the assurances of my highest consideration". It should be indented as a separate paragraph.

Informal correspondence is also common. In fact, some Principal might prefer addressing dignitaries by their first name or hand write on a letter "Dear name". Digital diplomacy via email is one fundamental example where a technological innovation has helped facilitate speedier communication and provided reliability in communication.
Informal letters closes: "Yours truly," or "Yours sincerely," or "I remain Dear Sir [Madam]…" Use the name of the addressee when it is known. The forms "Dear Sir" and "Dear Madam" are appropriate only in impersonal letters. In letters circulated to a large number of people, the form "Dear Sir or Madam" may be used.

Knowledge Management

In the absence of a Knowledge Management Officer, the Special Assistant can support the Principal in managing the intellectual knowledge and information generated and disseminated by the organizations.

This function consists in direct assistance to specialized units to capture their lessons and best practices using a range of tools. Experience has shown that the temporary, fast-paced nature of some organizations, in particular peacekeeping operations, as well as the high turnover of staff, challenges institutional memory retention. Hence, it is essential to support the knowledge management functions by helping teams to document their experience even in the absence of a dedicated staff member. The Special Assistant can facilitate the learning process and ensures that good practices are documented and that the actionable recommendations are forwarded to the organization's leadership for review and action.

The first step is initiating knowledge mapping, which is the identification of who knows what about which processes in the organization. This mapping exercise will guide the drafting of a knowledge management guidance and work plan. By providing a picture of an organization's knowledge capital and needs, knowledge mapping allows for the facilitation of targeted knowledge transfers on issues of importance to the organization's objectives. Based on the result of the knowledge mapping, a work plan will be prepared to identify opportunities where the Special Assistant can provide substantive input to implement departmental policy and take advantage of opportunities for institutional learning. It is important that flexibility is built into the work plan to allow the Special Assistant to document unforeseen events.

It is recommended that the knowledge management should contain the following objectives: Creating a knowledge-sharing environment; setting up a system for collection, archiving and analysis of knowledge; establishing a connection system with other practitioners; and establishing a system to translate lessons learned into policies.

1- Creation of a best practices and knowledge sharing culture among the personnel of each area identified in the mapping exercise

This objective will address the gaps in understanding the role of knowledge sharing and address the skepticism towards having staff to contribute to this effort. This can be done by providing training and induction briefing on knowledge management to organization leadership and staff in order to create the foundation of a culture of knowledge sharing among staff. Other tasks can include:

- Create, disseminate, analyze and implement the recommendations of a knowledge product by explaining how its implementation would be useful for future actions
- Disseminate best practices and knowledge-sharing information to all "relevant/interested" personnel on a regular basis through broadcast messages and intranet postings
- Identify knowledge needs and areas for collaboration and prepare targeted briefings/presentations
- Promote participation to Communities of Practices and other online platforms
- Establish a network of Focal Points in the organization, in key departments to help in gathering and distributing material

2- Collection of lessons learned, best practices and experiences in a standardized way, to be fed into the drafting and revision of policies, manuals and guidance

This objective leads to standardized gathering methods of best practices through facilitation, monitoring and archiving of Knowledge Management tools (i.e. End-of-Assignment Reports [EoAR], After Action Reviews, Hand-over Notes and Surveys of Practice) and archive methods such as databases, online archive (the clouds)

This objective can be achieved by the following tasks:

- Establish templates for knowledge collection such as End-of-Assignment Reports, After Action Reviews, and Handover Notes. Handover Notes should be a requirement for departing staff in their checkout process. Departing staff are normally more willing to share recommendations to improve programs and activity.
- Create a schedule of departing staff, mobility, and retirement, etc.
- Promote the drafting of After Actions Reviews in areas of interest for the organization, facilitating the provision of theme-specific guidance

3- Connecting people is as important as sharing information.

The system should facilitate knowledge sharing among staff by providing a knowledge management online platform such as Communities of Practice (CoPs) or other learning platforms to put colleagues with similar knowledge or interests in touch with each other. The Special Assistant can help in testing the web-based platform for CoPs, such as SharePoint, and with the creation of new CoPs in areas where there is a need to generate more knowledge.

4- Integration of lessons learned, best practices, policies and guidance into the organization's mandate implementation

The aim is to support the Principal and the organization in implementing the relevant UN policies and recommendations, and to provide colleagues with relevant lessons learned and best practices collected within the organization, or elsewhere, in the UN system, to improve the work processes and produce efficiency gains in all areas of responsibility. This can be achieved by providing information and regular follow-up on the implementation of relevant policies and guidance through:

- Research and dissemination of information on policies, guidance, lessons learned and best practices available within the peacekeeping and the UN system
- Creation, piloting and supporting the implementation of a tool to facilitate the integration of lessons learned into the planning of operations

Technological and Equipment Requirements

The technology existing in the organization needs to be assessed so that appropriate approaches can be devised to ensure effective dissemination of best practices materials, particularly to personnel deployed in outposts or field offices (if any). Internet performance, including e-mail quotas and access to documents made available through bulletin boards or other online platforms, must be checked and approaches to disseminating knowledge accordingly adapted.

For example, if the internet service level in the field offices does not support downloading documents from the intranet, support is needed so that all intranet uploads are provided to all personnel through e-mails to the head of each field office for subsequent dissemination. The increasing reliance of institutional tools on intranet resources must be accompanied by commensurate technology upgrades including to remote field locations.

Handover Notes

Handover Notes are documents created by staff members who are about to leave their positions, either temporarily or permanently, to assist their successor in carrying out their duties. Their purpose is to provide the staff member's successor with key knowledge and information regarding the position so that the transition period is as short and smooth as possible.

Any staff member who is about to leave his/her position permanently is required to write a Handover Note. They shall be written even when a staff member is leaving his/her position to assume new duties within the office. In the case of a temporary absence, particularly if the absence is longer than four weeks, it is strongly suggested that the staff member shall agree with the supervisor on whether a Handover Note should be written and, if so, how detailed it needs to be. A staff member who was temporarily covering the functions due to a colleague's absence shall also write a Handover Note to ensure a smooth transition back.

Handover notes shall be finalized during the week before the staff member leaves his/her position. Ideally, when feasible, there should be a period of overlap with the staff member's successor. If this is not possible, the staff member should send the handover note to his/her successor before departing and supplement the note with phone conversations or by e-mail. If the successor has not yet been appointed, the staff member should leave a handover note with his/her supervisor. When staff members assume duties at new positions, they should request a Handover Note from their predecessors, if one was not received already.

Handover Notes should be preferably no longer than 3-4 pages, excluding attachments. They should be factual rather than analytical. A proposed template is attached (see Annex XI).

Handover Notes do not need to be cleared by supervisors. The departing staff member should provide a copy of the Handover Note to his/her successor and his/her supervisor. The supervisor should indicate that s/

he received a Handover Note from the staff member during the checkout process (by signing the hand-over note).

The successors shall maintain a copy in the files. If the information and knowledge is still valid and relevant, the successor may pass it on to the next successor, along with his/her own Handover Note. Handover Notes may be widely shared, with the consent of the author. They are not intended as confidential documents (DPKO 2006).

End of Assignment Reports

End of Assignment Reports (hereafter EoAR) are personal analysis, assessments or evaluation by senior staff of issues, best practices and lessons learned in the implementation of their duties during the specific assignment and on institutional capacity of the Department to carry out mandated tasks. End of Assignment Reports are distinct from Handover Notes, which are strictly factual and do not contain analysis, assessment or evaluation.

The purpose of an EoAR is to provide an assessment and document lessons learned on the implementation of the Department's mandate, particularly with regard to the specific area of responsibility of the staff member concerned; and to provide recommendations for improving the organization's effectiveness and efficiency with the aim of advising policies, procedures and practices. EoARs contribute to the building of an institutional memory based on best practices/lessons learned by practitioners, and reflect the organization's commitment to continuous learning/improvement.

The preparation of an EoAR is expected from all senior staff (Heads of units, sections, etc.), at the discretion of the Principal. Other staff, particularly those long serving in the organization, may submit an EoAR voluntarily or upon request. End of Assignment Reports should be submitted preferably two to four weeks prior to leaving the position. Notes compiled throughout the duration of the assignment may facilitate the drafting of the End-of-Assignment Report.

The report should briefly describe the Division/Unit under examination and provide an assessment on the role and responsibilities of the Division/Unit. The report should focus on issues, best practices and lessons learned and highlight replicable factors that contributed to success or failure. It is advisable to compile notes throughout the duration of the assignment to facilitate the drafting of the EoAR. While the report draws on the collective action towards the functionality of the Division/Unit, it should be considered a personal and not a group effort as the personal views of the writer are expected. A proposed template is attached (see Annex XII).

The most valuable End of Assignment Reports focus on lessons learned and an analysis of experience and issues rather than on a historical recollection of events that may have occurred during the staff member's tenure. As a lessons learned exercise, the focus should be on what worked well, what worked less well and what should be done differently in the future. Drafters should seek to answer the following questions:

- What has been learned/noted during the assignment that should either be replicated or avoided elsewhere?
- What can the organization do in terms of policy development or otherwise to improve its capacity to support similar activities/operations in the future?

End of Assignment Reports should be provided to the Principal in copy to the Special Assistant. As personal learning accounts by individual staff members, End of Assignment Reports do not require clearance by senior management. The Principal reviews all End of Assignment Reports received and follows-up on recommendations as appropriate. The organization should periodically review EoARs and to provide an analysis of recommendations with potential organization system-wide impact, if any (DPKO 2006).

Any other assigned tasks

This magic phrase: "any other assigned tasks", which you can find closing most job descriptions in the United Nations, captures the essence of the role of a Special Assistant. In fact, it implies that the Principal could request any task imaginable; a lot depends on the nature of the office, the Principal's preference and the background, strength and skills of the Special Assistant.

The Special Assistant must be ready and prepared to do anything the Principal might need. This can happen in a last minute fashion as well. In a very fluid working environment, during dignitaries' visits or a few minute before an important speech, the Principal might need immediate help in reaching out to a stakeholder, getting the latest version of a report, or connecting to a video conference via phone or laptop. In all these cases inventiveness and improvisation can be useful. The best tip for the Special Assistant, in these cases, is to know the Principal well, as needs can vary enormously. These might vary from carrying the reading glasses or business cards, locating staff members involved in a security incident, providing information via SMS while the Principal is on a discussion panel.

ANY OTHER ASSIGNED TASKS

PART III - IDEAL PROFILE

UN Core Values and Competencies

There are a number of UN core values and competencies common to all Special Assistant's positions that are highly desirable for an outstanding candidate. The candidate must have strong Core UN values, namely professionalism, integrity and respect for diversity. Other competencies could be required in specific cases and for particular positions or organizations. There are several publications available online which go into more detail on the Core Values necessary for employment at the UN, such as the UN competency development - A practical guide.

Team Work

The Special Assistant must be a "people person". As interaction with colleagues, stakeholders and high-level government officials are very frequent, the candidate must know how to deal with people, address conflicts, build consensus and have command over the protocol rules. In particular, the candidate must know how to work within a team by supporting colleagues and sharing responsibility for actions and results. The team can be interpreted as the front office, the rest of the organization, or other stakeholders. In all cases, the candidate must know how to establish or develop a team culture and standards of behavior.

An outstanding candidate should:

- Act as a role model and encourage effective collaboration within the team, addressing non-collaborative behavior quickly
- Consult widely, seeking views from all interested parties within and outside the team, listening attentively, and taking all views into account in decisions
- Define, articulate and regularly promote team goals, encouraging supportive and cooperative behavior ahead of competition
- Take personal responsibility for team failings, never blaming others and always sharing the credit for success

Planning and Organizing

The best candidate is one who can efficiently manage his or her own time and the Principal's. This includes setting goals and targets for the candidate himself or herself and for the Principal, prioritizing the delivery of work, adjusting work or project priorities to take account of changing circumstances, organizing the time and resources necessary to deliver work, setting detailed project plans, or plans for an area of service, monitoring the delivery of work against a plan, and delivering one's own workload in an organized and time efficient manner. The ability to work under pressure is also highly required for this job, in particular in hardship duty stations. The candidate must know how to manage stress.

An outstanding candidate should:

- Always set clear, measurable goals and plan to guide his or her own work and the delivery of others
- Make highly effective use of his or her own and others' time, never missing deadlines or overloading others so they are too busy to deliver to schedule
- Willingly adjust his or her own and others' plans to take account of changes in circumstances
- Use plans and goals actively to monitor his or her own and others' performance and take remedial action when things start to slip

Client Orientation

A client-oriented candidate is one who:

- Considers all those to whom services are provided to be “clients” and seeks to see things from the client’s point of view
- Establishes and maintains productive partnerships with clients by gaining their trust and respect
- Identifies client’s needs and matches them to appropriate solutions
- Monitors on-going developments inside and outside the clients’ environment to keep informed and anticipates problems
- Keeps clients informed of progress or setbacks in projects
- Meets the timeline for delivery of products or services to the client

The Special Assistant carries out the day-to-day work with the aim to meet client needs and requirements. Some tips to put client orientation into practice:

In-Person Contact	Phone Contact	Email Contact
Greet/ Acknowledge the Client		
▪ Appropriate greeting (titles, surnames, etc.) ▪ Pleasant tone ▪ Identify yourself ▪ Positive non-verbals: smile, posture, eye contact	▪ Appropriate greeting (titles, surnames, etc.) ▪ Identify yourself and your unit ▪ Pleasant tone ▪ Smile (impacts tone)	▪ Appropriate greeting (titles, surnames, etc.) ▪ Identify yourself and your unit ▪ Pleasant tone in words
Establish Rapport ▪ Allow clients time to express their needs ▪ **Express empathy** ▪ Positive statements ▪ Ask questions	▪ Look for un-stated needs ▪ Express willingness to help ▪ Build trust ▪ Advocate for client needs	▪ Encourage clients to fully express their needs in writing, and thank them for doing so ▪ Check your assumptions especially when the locations differ
Assess Needs ▪ **Active listening** ▪ Ask questions to clarify and confirm ▪ Probe for both stated and un-stated needs	▪ Summarize ▪ Utilise knowledgeable resources ▪ Ask for feedback	▪ **Read carefully** ▪ Consider whether a phone or in person contact may be the best way to resolve the need
Propose Solutions and Look for Win-Win Solutions ▪ Match solution to client needs ▪ Look for alternatives as appropriate ▪ **Provide clear explanations, choices or advice** ▪ Check for understanding	▪ Demonstrate confidence ▪ Seek to understand the client’s underlying needs ▪ Look for solutions or alternatives that address the underlying needs ▪ Verify that solutions meet client needs	
Taking Action ▪ Provide information on actions required by client and provider ▪ Identify next steps ▪ Provide timelines and/or deadlines	▪ Identify required documentation ▪ Summarize and confirm understanding ▪ Provide regular status updates ▪ Verify that actions taken meet client need	
Establishing an On-going Partnership ▪ **Build trust** ▪ Express empathy ▪ Positive verbal/non-verbal communication ▪ Anticipate needs ▪ Meet timelines and deadlines	▪ Provide accurate information ▪ Offer advice ▪ Keep commitments ▪ Monitor the client’s environment ▪ Provide updates ▪ Be available ▪ Show interest in partnership	

Figure: United Nations – Client Service Skills Programme 2015

Communication

The Special Assistant interacts regularly with a wide range of stakeholders. Knowledge of several languages is useful to establish favorable channels of communication with the various people the Special Assistant may meet.

An outstanding candidate should:

- Always encourage others to contribute and attend fully to their views
- Effectively adapt communication styles to suit all different audiences
- Communicate with impact, conveying credibility and confidence
- Always communicate in a clear, structured manner

Confidentiality is also paramount for this role particularly given that the Special Assistant has access to the Principal's inbox. As a rule of thumb, anything personal or related to Human Resources, recruitment, or personal information of staff should be considered confidential and not to be shared with anyone. In addition, any information that can endanger the life of individuals or the credibility of the organization must not be shared. On the other hand, you can share confidential information with the Principal if his/her action is required or needed.

Management Competencies

The Special Assistant is often in charge of the correct functioning of the front office. He/she has to coordinate the work of the front office team, ensure roles, responsibilities are clear, and workloads shared evenly among the team. The Special Assistant can be the first or second reporting officer of the front office team. To excel in managing people, developing supervisory skills is required. There are different people management styles, such as directive or empowering. Both have pros and cons; ideally, the Special Assistant should be in line with the Principal's managing style to convey coherent direction to staff. The management competencies required are managing performance, judgment/decision making, and building trust.

Managing performance

The competency of Managing Performance is important for the Special Assistant in managing the front office team, establishing reporting lines and allocating responsibilities, allocating people to tasks, conducting performance appraisals, and providing feedback, both formal and informal, to others. At times, the Special Assistant will act as a coach or mentor and set or support staff members' development plans.

An outstanding candidate should:

- Establish and regularly review the reporting lines, accountabilities and responsibilities of all team members to ensure structures of support for performance goals
- Provide clear, specific and timely feedback to all team members on a regular basis, addressing any concerns promptly through coaching or other development actions
- Take performance management seriously, giving priority to formal performance appraisals and informal performance discussions, preparing thoroughly before them, and always treating staff fairly
- Support the development and career aspirations of staff, helping them fulfill their long term goals as well as addressing development needs within the current role

Judgment/Decision

Often the Special Assistant must make judgmental calls on behalf of the Principal. Therefore, this competency is vital when making decisions affecting the Principal, the team and the whole organization, when gathering and analyzing complex issues and data in order to solve complex problems and when generating options for action. Sometimes decisions can be tough or unpopular; it is important point to keep as a point of reference the best interests of the organization and its beneficiaries' needs.

An outstanding candidate should:

- Quickly focus on the key issues, rapidly gathering and assimilating data to develop a sound and accurate understanding of a complex situation at many levels
- Consider the wider impact of decisions, be that internally, organizationally, externally, socially, economically and/or politically
- Take an analytical approach to decision making, using data to ensure decisions are considered, seeking expert input when relevant, and checking all assumptions against facts, and ensuring all managers within the department or division do likewise

Building trust

This competency is important for the Special Assistant given that he/she is responsible for efficiently managing the front office, delegating important work to others, including senior UN staff, negotiating, either with internal or external contacts, handling confidential or highly sensitive information and addressing sensitive issues with other people.

An outstanding candidate should:

- Encourage openness so that people talk without any fear of repercussions, and encourage each other to address issues openly
- Ensure all management communications and actions are consistent, deliberate and predictable, and will discuss the rationale for them when asked
- Overtly express confidence in colleagues and staff, allocating them responsibilities and providing them with the freedom to deliver without unnecessary interference
- Treat sensitive or confidential information appropriately, never talking out of turn, and encourage others to do likewise, taking firm action where confidence is broken

Terms of Reference

As mentioned before, the TOR of a Special Assistant can vary between organizations. The Special Assistant's responsibilities can vary between political analysis, monitoring and reporting, correspondence management, planning, travel and meeting arrangement, liaison with external stakeholders, knowledge management, staff relations, drafting reports, briefing notes, coding cables and meeting minutes. However, there are some tasks that are similar in most job descriptions and others that emerge ad hoc. Some examples of TORs are attached in Annex XI.

Special Assistant Toolbox

Special Assistants have a wide range of duties and responsibilities that span both the programmatic as well as support functions. Technology can enhance their ability to deliver their mandates, share information securely and easily on mobile devices from anywhere in a mission area, and contribute to data-driven planning and decision-making. For example, smartphones, tablets and other mobile devices enable real-time information gathering and reporting, with specialized applications designed to meet substantive and support needs.

The following are suggested items for a Special Assistant's toolbox:

- Smartphone with:
    - Note taking app that synchronizes data with your office computer (i.e. OneNote)
    - Access to own and Principal's email
    - Access to own and Principal's calendars
    - Access to Principal's social media accounts (Twitter)
    - Updated telephone directory including the Principal's staff, counterparts, external partners
    - Voice/data credit (use Wi-Fi when available and use roaming only when strictly necessary)
    - Travel management App (e.g. Tripit)
    - Real time voice messaging apps (Facebook, WhatsApp, Skype)
    - Camera
- Tablet with Bluetooth keyboard and note taking app
- Phone/Tablet Charger with universal plug adaptor and cables
- Watch: keep track of meeting times, plan next steps
- Enough money and credit cards (yes, you might advance your Principal's dinner bill!)

If deployed in hardship duty stations:

- A valid driving license
- Portable Wi-Fi/internet hotspots, allowing internet access anywhere (e.g. BRCK device)
- Safety bag (with cash, passport, prescription medicines)
- Sunglasses
- Water handy at all time

When traveling:

- Earplugs, mask and air pillow
- Travel documents
- Visas
- Phone/tablet charger with universal plug adaptor and cables

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cristian Mazzei is currently the Special Assistant to the Director of Ecosystems Division at the United Nations Environment Programme.

Since 2004, Cristian has worked within the United Nations (UN) System involving conflict resolution, policy implementation, capacity building for development, humanitarian relief operations and program management. His understanding of the Special Assistant role comes from 10 years of experience in the UN system including 4 years in the field of peacekeeping.

Before his current assignment, he worked as Special Assistant to the Director of Government, UN and Multilateral Affairs in UNICEF and to the Chief of Staff in the peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO).
In these functions, he has accrued specific work experience and skills required for an efficient Special Assistant. Some of these skills includes a succinct and to the point communication style, the ability to handle competitive priorities and determine when to act or request attention of the Principal, manage busy schedules, be the eyes and ears in the interest of the Director and, ultimately, for the organization.

Earlier in his career, Cristian worked in several other UN agencies such as UNICEF, FAO, UNICRI, and ICTR.

He graduated from the LUISS Guido Carli University in Rome, obtaining a master's degree in political science and international relations. He is currently pursuing a PhD Research study on Peacekeeping and Natural resources management.

Cristian is an Italian national and speaks English, French and Spanish fluently.

ANNEXES

ANNEX I - *Options Paper*

Options paper for an issues meeting on ABXX

I. Background and rationale
The objective of the meeting is to agree on a strategy to keep the boundary demarcation process on track following recent demarches by Arcadia and the submission of comments by the parties on the Arcadia-Aurora Boundary Commission's (ABXX) unmarked maps of the border area.

The wide gap between the positions of the two parties
Arcadia argues against a "mechanical" drawing of the demarcation line and urges the Commission to examine carefully the situation on the ground during the demarcation phase, taking into consideration "human geography".
Aurora expects the ABXX to remain faithful to its 13 April 2000 Delimitation Decision, and has shown no inclination to enter into discussions with Arcadia about altering the line.

II. Issue for decision
Which way forward should the UN support in order to keep the boundary demarcation process on track?

Option (a): Bilateral agreement on adjustments
The parties agree to negotiate specific adjustments to the boundary line prior to the scheduled commencement of demarcation in May 2000. In the absence of an agreement within that timeframe, the border would be demarcated based on the ABXX Delimitation Decision. If requested, the UN could facilitate these negotiations on the condition that the parties accept, in advance, to implement the ABXX decision if no agreement is reached in the specified timeframe.

<u>Advantage:</u>

- **Political way out:** This option provides a political avenue for resolving differences between the parties.

<u>Disadvantages:</u>

- **Lack of political acceptability**: It is unlikely that Aurora would accept this option.
- **Danger of domino effect**: The danger is that few, if any, agreements would be reached, prompting Arcadia to suspend its participation in demarcation (alleging, perhaps, bad faith by Aurora or inadequate facilitation by the UN, or both).

Option (b): ABXX to make binding decisions on adjustments
In an attempt to try to manage minor adjustments to the boundary line, the parties could be invited to empower the ABXX to make binding decisions, in the course of the demarcation, to make minor adjustments to the line, based on "human geography".

<u>Advantages</u>:

- **Middle ground**: This option strives for a middle ground between loyalty to the Delimitation Decision and the initiation of open-ended negotiations.
- **Legality**: It preserves the EEBC framework and the benefits of binding arbitration.

<u>Disadvantages</u>:

- **Potential for delays**: This option could result in considerable delays, as the ABXX would have to undertake additional field surveys in affected areas.
- **Lack of political acceptability**: It might not be "enough" of a change to satisfy Arcadia, and "too much" of a change for Aurora.

3. Recommended option: ABXX to make binding decisions on adjustments

ANNEX II - *Tasking tool*

Office of the Director – Tasking tool				
ITEM: European Commission Consultations - invitation to provide inputs DATE: 09/03/17 DEADLINE: 20 March 2017				
Name	**Tasked**	**Phone Number**	**Mobile Numbers**	**Notes**
Programme Coordinators				
XXXX – Coordinator	X			For consultation and review
YYYY –				
AAAA UNIT				
AAAA - head of	X			Consolidate inputs per unit and submit
BBBB				
CCCC UNIT				
CCCC				
DDDD				
Other Staff				

INSTRUCTIONS

Dear Leadership Team,

The European Commission has published XXXX

Please provide your contributions taking into account the level of knowledge, use and interest to the EU funding instruments.

Send your contribution to YYYY (email address) **by Monday 20 March 2017 COB** with copy to XXXX (email address)

ANNEX III - *Action Points Minutes Template*

Office Coordinators Meeting

07 March 2016

Participants: XXX, YYY, ZZZ

Agenda

1. Department Work plan and reporting
2. Budget Update
3. Human Resources
4. Any other Business

1. **Department Work plan and reporting**
   - The department submitted the draft departmental work …

2. **Budget update**
   - The department can now determine …

3. **Human Resources**
   - A number of recruitment is ongoing. This includes …

4. **AOB**
   - Department Task Teams will be meeting ...

Action points:

Who	What	When
Operations Unit	Share the updated Factsheets	25 March
All Offices	Update project closure list	25 April
All Staff	Provide inputs to the Events Calendar and Publication Plan	25 March

ANNEX IV – *Travel Report*

MISSION REPORT	
DISTRIBUTION MCEU,GPA	**NAMES:** Cristian Mazzei, Special Assistant to the Director
	PERIOD: 21 Jul - 21 Aug 2016
	MEETINGS: - Meeting with Uruguayan authorities, Presidential Office, Ministry of Environment, Civil Society, - Meeting with Argentinian representatives from Ministry of Environment - Meeting with the UN Country Team
	VENUE: Montevideo, Uruguay
FILE:	**MAIN PERSON(S) CONTACTED:** - XXYY, Resident coordinator - YYXX, Coordinator Officer **Uruguayan Authorities & Civil Society** - XXYY, Vice-Minister environment - Amb. VVXX,, Director of environment Division, MFA
	OBJECTIVES: - Prepare a Mapping of regional priorities - Prepare 2 projects concept notes - Prepare a needs assessment on ITW in Uruguay

1. **Regional Projects Proposal: "Water resources joint management of the of the Plata Basin"**

This proposal aims to generate institutional arrangements and transnational actions necessary to ensure a model of integrated and sustainable water, fisheries and coastal habitats in the watercourses that form the Plata Basin resource management. […]

Action:

- FEU to review the Uruguayan Strategic plan on water. (Uruguay is running consultations aiming to launch the plan on World water day)
- FEU to review concept note for possible support to the project

2. **XXYYY**

Since 2015, The Ministry of housing, land planning and environment is responsible for Illegal Trade of Wildlife. […]

Recommendations

- Uruguay would need to enhance its legal framework to provide better guidance, separation of duties among all actors and better coordination on ITW.

DETAILED REPORT **[X] ENCLOSED [] NOT NECESSARY**	**DOCUMENTATION RECEIVED** **[ ] ENCLOSED [x] NO DOCUMENTATION**	**DATE: 21 Aug 2016**
CLASSIFICATION: **[ ] CONFIDENTIAL [x] GENERAL**	**SIGNATURE:** Cristian Mazzei - Special Assistant	**SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE:** XXXYYY - Director

ANNEX V - *Code Cables Template*

TO: LADSOUS, UNATIONS, NEW YORK
FELTMAN, UNATIONS, NEW YORK

INFO: HAQ, UNATIONS, NEW YORK
PILLAY, OHCHR, GENEVA

SUBJECT: **Guidelines on content and format of code cables**

Summary: All code cables exceeding one page must have a summary at the top; the summary should give the reader an immediate appreciation of the subject treated in the code cable and any main conclusion or observation. (text bold – line spacing: 1.15")

Main Points:

1. State the purpose of the code cable in the first paragraph. Date to be left blank to be completed by O/SRSG. (line spacing 1.5)

Heading as appropriate (in bold)

2. The narrative of the code cable should be presented in main points; keep to one point/idea per paragraph; use subheadings if a main point is presented over several paragraphs; when presenting a chronology of events or the position of different stakeholders, strive to provide a commentary whenever necessary for a better understanding of context or nuance. [Comments: Strive to provide a commentary whenever necessary for a better understanding of context or nuance].

3. Format should not be justified, keep the maximum length of the body to four pages.

4. Be short, concise and to the point. Use a formal tone since cables is a formal means of communicating. Use gender-sensitive language (chairperson, not chairman; spokesperson nor spokesman).

5. Always consult the relevant departments on the content of your code cable, as appropriate. Consultation is mandatory.

Urgency designations for incoming code cables

6. Reply to, or act on, incoming code cables marked "Immediate" within the same day and incoming code cables marked "Most Immediate" upon receipt.

Sensitivity designations

7. Use the designation "Only/Confidential" sparingly for "information whose unauthorized disclosure could reasonably be expected to cause damage to the work of the UN". Use the designation "No Distribution/Strictly Confidential" for "information whose unauthorized disclosure could reasonably cause exceptionally grave damage to or impede the conduct of the work of the UN.

Conclusion:

8. Whenever appropriate, the code cable should end with a conclusion; typically presenting a position, suggested way forward, challenges or elements of achievement for the attention of senior management at HQ and other recipients.

Best regards,

Drafter: surname and department.

ANNEX VI - *Briefing notes Template*

To:	XXXX, Executive Director	**Date:**	
From:	XXX, Department Director	**Reference:**	
Subject:	For a meeting, subject should contain name of the event, theme in discussion, location, and date. For an informative briefing, subject should contain name of project, main theme		

Guidelines: Briefing Notes length: Two pages max

Deadline: Seven days from departure for mission and four days for meeting in Principals location

Details on Meeting and Participants:
Moderator/Chair/Principal's Role: Other panel members/participants/persons present are:
1.
2.

Guidelines: Edit this section as needed to fit the briefing type:

a) Bilateral meeting which may include bio details and when their last meeting was
b) High level meeting, workshop, conference sessions
c) Country mission, which should include details about organization's activities and political situation in country

Background Info/Summary (*1 page max*):
Guidelines: *Keep this section short and succinct; avoid repeating info under different headings in the brief. Focus on context, facts and figures.*

Key Messages:

1.
2.
Guidelines *These are not speaking points or speaking notes. Key messages are the salient "take home messages" that need to be reinforced or conveyed by the organization.*
NOTE: Speeches and speaking points to be attached as annexes.

Required Outcomes:
1.
2.
Guidelines: Clarify what has to be achieved through this interaction/meeting/intervention, i.e. results-based approach.

Sensitivities/Issues to be aware of:

1.
2.
Guidelines: As the most important paragraph, this section should include important issues to be aware of and/or sensitive information. If a BN does not contain such information, why is it for the Principal's attention?

Contact persons *(for feedback & follow-up):*

1. Name, email, mobile telephone number
2. Name, email, mobile telephone number

Attachments including:
a) Speech
b) Speaking notes
c) Substantive and supporting documents
d) Publications or articles

ANNEX VII - *Talking points template – Sample 1*

Talking Points on [Mission/Topic] for the Deputy Secretary-General's meeting with H.E. Mr. [First Name] [Last Name], [Functional Title]

DD Month YYYY, h:mm a.m. OR p.m.

Objectives of the meeting:

- Type objectives here.

Key issues expected to be raised:

- Type key issues expected to be raised here.

Mission/Topic

Type background here. Use regular typeface instead of italics.

- **Type talking points here.**

ANNEX VIII - *Talking points template – Sample 2*

Unclassified or Confidential or Strictly Confidential

Talking Points for Executive Director, Smith's meeting with
[First Name] [Last Name], [Function]
Day Month Year

Objectives of the meeting

Mission/Topic:

- Type objective here

[If necessary] Relevant information on the context of the meeting and/or biographical elements.

[If necessary] **General Contribution to the organization**
Type summary of peacekeeping profile here

Mission or topic

Type background here

Topic

- **Type talking point here**

ANNEX IX – *Speech Template*

Remarks at [Name of the Event]

Title of the Speech – *when possible*

Mark Kevlar, Special Representative of the Secretary-General

City (Country), DD Month YYYY

This is the general template for the Principal's speeches and remarks.

It is necessary to have a large margin on the left side of the document.

Each sentence should start on a new line.

Sentence should rarely be longer than two lines.

Long sentences make the speech hard to give and difficult to understand.

However longer sentences can be justify by stylistic repetition.

Indeed, nothing better than the repetition to draw the attention of the audience, nothing better than the repetition to make your point, nothing better than the repetition to put emotion in a speech.

A repetition is rarely more than three occurrences, and should be more than two.

The sentences to be given looking into the eyes of the audience should be in bold.

The text should always be aligned to the left and not "justified".

No sentence should ever be split between two pages.

ANNEX X - *Note Verbale*

DPKO/OUSG/2007/223

The Secretariat of the United Nations presents its compliments to the Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations and has the honour to refer to the Maritime Task Force (MTF) of the United Nations Interim Force in Arcadia (UNIFA).

The Secretariat wishes to express its gratitude to Aurora for extending its contribution to UNIFA until 31 August 2008 and for providing its valuable leadership of the MTF until 29 February 2008. This significant commitment, which shows the importance Aurora attaches to a successful implementation of Security Council resolution 1754 (2006), is much welcomed and appreciated.

As there is an immediate need to further support the MTF, due to an unexpected shortfall of contributions, the Secretariat would be grateful if Aurora would consider expanding its current contribution with additional maritime assets. A supplementary commitment to the MTF with patrol boats and/or a frigate for the entire period of the current operational phase, until 29 February 2008, would be highly appreciated.

The Secretariat of the United Nations avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Permanent Mission of Aurora to the United Nations the assurances of its highest consideration.

18 September 2007

ANNEX XI - *Handover Note*

Name: **Index number:**

Job Title:

Date of Handover Note:

Signature: **Received by (Supervisor)**

Duration of Assignment (include start and end date):

Brief Description of Duties:

This section may be kept brief when up-to-date terms of reference (TOR) are attached. Include ant focal point functions held.

- …………….

Supervisor and reporting procedures:

Regular/re-occurring meetings, reports or procedures:

Key documents/reference material to read (attach when possible):

Status of recent and current projects/reports/meetings:

1. Name of project/report/meeting
   - Status
   - Action needed
   - Partners
   - Budget (if applicable)
   - Critical issues/challenges/priorities
2. Repeat as many times as necessary. Indicate priority projects.

Where to find files (hardcopy and electronic):

Calendar of major upcoming activities and/or events (optional):

Contacts (internal and key external partners):

Name	Organization	Phone	E-mail	Comments

Your contact information after departure:

- Phone:
- E-mail:
- Skype:

Suggested attachments:

- TOR/Job description
- Office staffing table, division of labor, organigram

Key documents relevant for the position

ANNEX XII - *End-of-Assignment Report*

Title of position:

Date of End of Assignment Report:

Duration of Assignment:

1. Short Narrative on Branch/Unit function:

In a maximum of 1-2 pages, the author should provide:

- A brief description of the specific areas of responsibility of the staff member concerned
- The status of Division/Unit functionality upon arrival
- Brief summary of highlights of Division/Unit implementation during the author's tenure

2. Issues and Recommendations:

This is the main section of the report. The author should identify issues that pertain to or influence the Branch/Unit functionality of his/her area of responsibility.

Issue: "………..."

Background

Describe any relevant background information or context regarding the issue.

Good practices

Describe good practices related to the issue and the benefits they brought. Explain why they were good practices.

Challenges and lessons learned

Describe challenges and identified lessons related to the issue. Include unsuccessful practices and an analysis of why they were not successful. Describe attempted solutions and results.

Recommendations for concerned Branch/Unit

List recommendations that are applicable to the Division/Unit. Recommendations should be actionable.

Recommendations for other Branch/Unit and UNEP HQ, including recommendation for policy reviews

List recommendations that are applicable to other Branches/Units or UNEP as a whole. Recommendations should be actionable and directly correlated to a specific issue. Highlight areas where policy development could provide a solution to a particular issue.

Issue: "………" [Continue with as many issues as necessary]

3. Confidential observations (if necessary, 1-2 pages):

In this section, authors can include observations that are sensitive. This section will be considered highly confidential and distribution will be carefully restricted.

4. Contact Information (copy from Handover Note)

E-mail address and telephone number where the author can be reached in the future.

ANNEX XIII - *Examples of Special Assistant's Terms of Reference – Sample 1*

Posting Title: SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, P5

Under the direct guidance and supervision of UNEP's Executive Director, the incumbent will perform the following duties:

Responsibilities

1. Support and advice the Executive Director (ED) on programmatic, policy and managerial issues:
• Coordinate strategic prioritization of all communications addressed to the ED, review and comment, suggest courses of action, monitor progress of preparation;
• Finalize documents reflecting UNEP policies;
• Monitor and identify emerging policy and managerial issues in consultation with UNEP senior management;
• Prepare background briefing material for the ED.

2. Maintain liaison with UNEP Divisions and serve as contact between the ED, EO, Senior Management and UNEP Regional Offices:
• Establish and maintain effective liaison with senior management on policy as well as programmatic issues relevant to the ED's functions and responsibilities;
• Liaise closely with the Deputy Executive Director (DED), Chef de Cabinet and EO team, keeping abreast of key developments on strategic issues;
• Manage the ED's day-to-day commitments;
• Ensure prompt and efficient communication and coordination between the ED and UNEP Divisions/Offices;
• Review communication/correspondence for ED approval, together with the Chef de Cabinet;
• Draft correspondence for and on behalf of the ED, including confidential correspondence, in close liaison with the UNEP's Divisions and relevant staff;
• Coordinate, plan, and prepare and organize ED's official travel;
• Accompany the ED on missions and keep in close contact with EO with regard to the substantive and logistical preparations required.

3. Advise and support the ED with governments, delegations, senior UN officials, UN system organizations and non-governmental organizations:
• Facilitate effective communication and contacts between the ED and these bodies/ organizations;
• Bring to ED, DED and Chef de Cabinet's attention, issues relevant to UNEP's bilateral relations with governments and interagency cooperation;
• Receive and review confidential communication from governments and draft correspondence for and on behalf of the ED.

4. Coordinate and manage the ED's meetings and communication:
• Coordinate the ED's meetings, including the quarterly and monthly meetings with Division Directors, arrange the agenda and coordinate follow-up actions;
• Coordinate the activities of UNEP-related participation in international conferences;
• Support the ED on internal and external communication of UNEP in close collaboration with UNEP's Division of Communications and Public Information;
• Keep abreast of follow-up from Senior Management Team meetings together with the Chef de Cabinet.

5. Undertake ad hoc assignments at the request of the ED.

Competencies

1. Professionalism: Demonstrated professional competence in the field offices of sustainable development and multilateral relations; strong analytical skills and ability to analyze complex political issues; high degree of flexibility; willingness to travel extensively and work long hours; Ability to work in a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic environment with sensitivity and respect for diversity. Shows pride in work and in achievements; is conscientious and efficient in meeting commitments; is motivated by professional rather than personal concerns; Remains calm in stressful situations.

2. Planning & Organizing: Develops clear goals that are consistent with agreed strategies; Identifies priority activities and assignments; Adjusts priorities as required; Allocates appropriate amount of time and resources for completing work; Foresees risks and allows for contingencies when planning; Monitors and adjusts plans and actions as necessary; Uses time efficiently.

3. Leadership: Serves as a role model that other people want to follow: Empowers others to translate vision into results; Is proactive in developing strategies to accomplish objectives; Establishes and maintains relationships with a broad range of people to understand needs and gain support; Anticipates and resolves conflicts by pursuing mutually agreeable solutions; Drives for change and improvements; does not accept the status quo; Shows the courage to take unpopular stands. Provides leadership and takes responsibility for incorporating gender perspectives and ensuring the equal participation of women and men in all areas of work; Demonstrates knowledge of strategies and commitment to the goal of gender balance in staffing.

4. Managing Performance: Delegates the appropriate responsibility, accountability and decision-making authority; Makes sure that roles, responsibilities and reporting lines are clear to each staff member; Accurately judges the amount of time and resources needed to accomplish a task and matches task to skills; Monitors progress against milestones and deadlines; Regularly discusses performance and provides feedback and coaching to staff; Encourages risk-taking and supports creativity and initiative; Actively supports the development and career aspirations of staff; appraises performance fairly.

5. Teamwork: Works collaboratively with colleagues to achieve organizational goals; Solicits input by genuinely valuing others' ideas and expertise; Is willing to learn from others; Places team agenda before personal agenda; Supports and acts in accordance with final group decision, even when such decisions ay not entirely reflect own position; Shares credit for team accomplishments and accepts joint responsibility for team shortcomings.

Education

Advanced university degree (Master's degree or equivalent) in political science, economics, law, environmental science or public administration. A first-level university degree in combination with two additional years of qualifying experience may be accepted in lieu of the advanced university degree.

Work Experience

A minimum of ten (10) years of progressively responsible experience in environmental, programme management and sustainable development is required. Experience in international and multilateral relations is required. Experience with the United Nations common system is an advantage.

ANNEX XIII - *Examples of Special Assistant's Terms of Reference – Sample 2*

Posting Title: Special Assistant to the Chief of Staff – P3

Under the direct supervision of the Chief, Executive Office, the incumbent will perform the following duties:

Responsibilities

1. Identify emerging policy issues for the consideration of the Chief, Executive Office.
2. Consult regularly with colleagues in the Executive Office on matters of mutual concern, including decisions taken by the Executive Director and Deputy Executive Director, as well as the general functioning of the office.
3. Support the Chief's meetings: Assist in planning for and participating in meetings related to the United Nations Environment Assembly and other meetings with key stakeholders.
4. Coordinate the preparation of briefing materials for the Chief's meetings and official mission files, ensuring that materials from other offices are submitted in a timely manner and are of high quality.
5. Guide the Administrative Assistant on all logistical preparations for mission travel, in coordination with the relevant colleagues, particularly those in out-posted offices and external interlocutors. Ensure the finalization of the Chief's mission reports and dissemination of information to the relevant colleagues in UNEP, ensuring that any follow-up actions are implemented.
6. Prioritize important correspondence and issues for the Chief's attention. Review all incoming and outgoing correspondence, specifically all communications prepared for signature by the Executive Director, Deputy Executive Director and the Chief, Executive Office.
7. Ensure all items logged in the Correspondence Tracking System (CTS) are assigned appropriately and correctly. Supervise and oversee the timely follow-up of assigned items, ensuring timely completion of the assignments.
8. Support the Chief, Executive Office in providing the Secretariat functions to the Senior Management Team (SMT). This includes: identifying priorities, problems and issues to be addressed; preparing the agenda of the SMT meetings/retreats; supervising the preparation of relevant documentation; preparing the reports and initiating the follow-up activities and their implementation; fostering teamwork and communication across organization boundaries; undertaking Special projects as necessary and as recommended by the Chief, Executive Office.
9. Perform any other relevant duties.

Competencies

PROFESSIONALISM: Proven ability to provide seasoned advice on a broad range of programme, organizational and administrative areas to facilitate decision-making; ability to review and edit the work of others. Shows pride in work and in achievements; Demonstrates professional competence and mastery of subject matter; is conscientious and efficient in meeting commitments, observing deadlines and achieving results; Is Motivated by professional rather than personal concerns; Shows persistence when faced with difficult problems or challenges; remains calm in stressful situations.

COMMUNICATION: Effective communication skills, both oral and written, ability to defend and explain difficult issues with respect to key decisions and positions to staff; ability to communicate management decisions; ability to prepare written reports that are clear, concise and meaningful. Speaks and writes clearly and effectively; listens to others, correctly interprets messages from others and responds appropriately; asks questions to clarify, and exhibits interest in having two-way communication; tailors language, tone, style and format to match audience; demonstrates openness in sharing information keeping people informed.

TEAMWORK: Good inter-personal skills; demonstrated ability to work in a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic environment and to maintain effective working relations with people of different nationals and cultural backgrounds. Ability to supervise and gain assistance of others in a team endeavor. Works collaborative with colleagues to achieve organizational goals; is willing to learn from others; places team agenda before personal agenda; shares credit for team accomplishments and accepts joint responsibility for team shortcomings.

PLANNING AND ORGANIZING: Develops clear goals that are consistent with agree strategies; identifies priority activities and assignments; adjusts priorities as required; allocates appropriate amount of time and resources for completing work; foresees risks and allows for contingencies when planning; monitors and adjusts plans and actions as necessary; uses time efficiently.

Education

An Advanced University Degree (Masters or equivalent) in political sciences, economics, environmental science, public administration or related field offices. A first university degree in combination with two additional years of qualifying experience may be accepted in lieu of the advanced degree.

Work Experience

A minimum of five years of progressively responsible experience in political sciences, economics, environmental science, public administration or related field offices. Preferably, three years of the experience should be with issues related to international environmental agenda. Experience with the UN common system is an added advantage.

ANNEX XIII - *Examples of Special Assistant's Terms of Reference – Sample 3*

Posting Title: SPECIAL ASSISTANT, POLITICAL AFFAIRS, P4

Org. Setting and Reporting
This position is with the United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK). The Special Assistant will report directly to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG).

Responsibilities

Within limits of delegated authority and under the supervision of the SRSG, the Special Assistant will be responsible for performing the following duties: Coordination and Facilitation - Provide substantive and practical support to the SRSG in implementing the Mission's mandate; Keep the SRSG informed on all matters requiring his personal attention, assist in formulating options as to how those matters might be handled, and ensure appropriate follow-up, as directed; Organize and manage the SRSG's meetings and UNMIK events, prepare written summaries and conduct follow-up activities, as appropriate; Coordinate/ draft correspondence for the SRSG's signature. Political Analysis, Advice and Reporting - Identify, analyze and monitor political developments and emerging issues with respect to the implementation of UNMIK's mandate; Assess implications and make recommendations on possible policies, strategies and other measures to address issues of concern and to advance mandated objectives; Monitor, evaluate and report on implementation; Coordinate/draft summary and analytical reports including, but not limited to, situation reports, briefing notes, notes to file, code cables and input for the reports of the Secretary-General to the Security Council. Management - Support planning and budgetary processes for UNMIK's operations; Participate in the selection of new staff. Undertake Special assignments as requested by SRSG. Perform other relevant duties as requested by the SRSG.

Competencies

Professionalism – Shows pride in work and in achievements; Demonstrates professional competence and mastery of subject matter; Is conscientious and efficient in meeting commitments, observing deadlines and achieving results; Is motivated by professional rather than personal concerns; Shows persistence when faced with difficult problems or challenges; Remains calm in stressful situations; Takes responsibility for incorporating gender perspectives and ensuring the equal participation of women and men in all areas of work.
Communication - Speaks and writes clearly and effectively; Listens to others, correctly interprets messages from others and responds appropriately; Asks questions to clarify, and exhibits interest in having two-way communication; Tailors language, tone, style and format to match audience; Demonstrates openness in sharing information and keeping people informed.
Client Orientation - Considers all those to whom services are provided to be "clients" and seeks to see things from clients' point of view; Establishes and maintains productive partnerships with clients by gaining their trust and respect; Identifies clients' needs and matches them to appropriate solutions; Monitors ongoing developments inside and outside the clients' environment to keep informed and anticipate problems; Keeps clients informed of progress or setbacks in projects; Meets timeline for delivery of products or services to client.

Education

Advanced university degree (Master's degree or equivalent) degree in political science, international relations, social science, economics, law, public administration, or related field offices. A first-level university degree in combination with qualifying experience may be accepted in lieu of the advanced university degree.

Work Experience

A minimum of seven years of progressively responsible experience in political affairs, diplomacy, conflict resolution, or related field offices. Extensive experience in political outreach, facilitation, analysis, advice and reporting is required. Previous experience working in the front office of a senior public official and/or as a Special Assistant (or similar) to a senior public official is required. Experience working in a UN Special Political Mission, UN Peacekeeping Operation or other UN field offices presence is required. Experience in the Balkans region is desirable. Languages English and French are the working languages of the United Nations Secretariat. For this post, fluency in oral and written English is required.

ANNEX XIV - *Message 1 for candidates invited to undertake a written assignment*

Dear Mr/Ms XX

With reference to your application for the position of XXX (Job Opening Number XXX) within the [Organization Name], I am pleased to inform you that you have been shortlisted for this position.

In this regard, I wish to invite you to undertake a written assignment to demonstrate your technical competence in the areas relevant to this position and as described in the Job Opening. This assignment will be time-bound, so it is important that you set aside the time allocated.

The time allocated for the assignment is XX minutes. You are expected to submit your answer sheet(s) at the expiry of the allocated time from when you receive the email containing the assignment.

Note that we are looking for a demonstration of your technical competency – not your ability to copy and paste information from the internet. Responses may be subjected to a test for plagiarism.

We propose to send out the test on XXX between XXX and YYY (city time). Kindly indicate your preferred time by cob on XXX. Should you be unable to sit the test at the proposed date, please suggest an alternative date and time.

Kind regards

ANNEX XIV - *Message 2 for candidates invited to undertake a written assignment*

Dear Mr/Ms XXX (Candidate 'X'),

Thank you for confirmation of your availability to do the written assignment for the above mentioned post.

You have been assigned the letter 'X' for purposes of this assignment. This is your identification and your name should not appear anywhere in your answer sheet(s). All your answer sheets should bear "Candidate X" as your identification.

The time allocated for the assignment is XX minutes as of the receipt of this email.

I wish you all the best in the test.

Kind regards

ANNEX XIV - *Message 3 for candidates invited to an interview*

Dear Mr/Ms XX

With reference to your application for the position of XXX (Job Opening Number XXX) within the [Organization Name], I am pleased to inform you that you reply to the written assignment surpassed the pass mark and that you will proceed to the next stage of the selection process.

In this regard, I wish to invite you to a XXX minutes oral (teleconference/skype call) interview on XXX at XXX (City time). Kindly confirm your availability. Please also provide me with your skype handle and the most convenient back-up telephone number to be used for the interview.

Please note that this is a competency-based interview focusing on the specific competencies required for this position as described in the Job Opening. If you were unfamiliar with this kind of interview, I would encourage you to consult the information available at: https://careers.un.org/lbw/home.aspx?viewtype=AYI

You can also find a list of the types of questions you might be asked at: http://www.umid.info/united-nations-competency-based-interview-questions

Lastly, please also provide me with the names and contact details of three referees.

Kind regards,

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