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Standard Operating Procedure

Field Entity Closure: Paper and Digital Records and Archives

Approved by: USG DOS

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**UN ARMS Standard Operating Procedure on
Field Entity Closure: Paper and Digital Records and Archives**

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A. PURPOSE

1. This document provides procedures for records management (RM) and archiving activities to be undertaken by United Nations field entities from pre-closure to liquidation. This SOP complements the information contained in the *Guide for Senior Leadership on Field Entity Closure*.¹
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B. SCOPE

2. These procedures cover the management of all field entities records and non-record material, both in paper and digital formats, throughout field entities' closure. This SOP applies to all United Nations Peace Operations, Special Political Missions and Good Offices.
3. These procedures do not cover the disposition of information in business information systems managed centrally by Headquarters or centrally hosted in the United Nations Global Service Centre

¹ 2018.08 *Guide for Senior Leadership on Field Entity Closure*

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(UNGSC), such as COMET, COSMOS, e-Billing, the Field Support Suite (FSS), SAGE, Umoja, Inspira or any future enterprise information system. Information contained in these systems will be reviewed and appraised in accordance with approved retention policies; in absence of such policies, the owners of the application(s) will advise OICT on their disposition; including their preservation as UN digital archives in consultation with ARMS.

4. The procedures do not cover the review and transfer of human rights records. For advice and procedures on transferring human rights records to OHCHR in line with the OHCHR/DPKO/DPA/DFS Policy on Human Rights in United Nations Peace Operations and Political Missions, please refer to the Annex 8: OHCHR Guidance Note: Transfer of OHCHR Records to the Archives.
5. Specific procedures apply to the management of Official Status Files (staff files), for instructions please contact the Human Resources Services of the Department of Operational Support (DOS): DOS_hr_advice@un.org
6. In addition, at mandate completion, the audio-visual public records created by the SCPI Component stored on shared drives, stand-alone devices and cloud storage are usually considered duplicates. Important audio-visual records should have already been sent to the audio-visual Library of the Department for Global Communication (DGC) at Headquarters during the life of the field entity². If the field entity is unsure whether the audio-visual records were already transferred to DGC, please contact: <https://www.unmultimedia.org>

C. RATIONALE

7. This SOP was developed to ensure the effective management of paper and digital records from pre-closure to liquidation. Following these procedures will enable entities to identify all paper and digital records which need to be destroyed on-site; records to be retained on-site in the event they are required by a successor entity; and records to be transferred to United Nations Headquarters or OHCHR, for preservation and future access as archives. Adhering to these procedures will also mitigate the risk of information loss and unauthorized access to the records.
8. Records management and archiving are one of the key pillars of field entity closure. The Director/Chief of Mission Support (D/CMS) or Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) or Chief Executive Officer (CEO) as the lead on the field entity closure will provide oversight of these activities through the Closure Team Coordinator³. The Archives and Records Management Section is the United Nations Secretariat's authority archives management and will guide the entities in this process, working collaboratively with the Division of Special Activities within Department of Operational Support (DOS), the Department of Peace Operations (DPO), the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) and the Office of Information and Communication Technology (OICT).

D. PROCEDURES

D.1 Introduction

9. In its Field Entity Closure Plan, the D/CMS-CAO-CEO shall include a summary of all major records management activities and timelines required by this SOP, as well as anticipated resources necessary to complete the tasks in an accountable and effective manner. The entity is advised to allocate funds for an on-site assessment/advisory mission by ARMS at pre-closure to assist with the planning and implementation of activities set out in this SOP and the 2018 Guide for Senior

² 2016.11 *Policy on Strategic Communication and Public Information*

³ 2018.23 *Mission/ Field Entity Closure: MSD Team Organigramme*

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Leadership on Field Entity Closure. The records management activities of a closing entity can be broken down into four phases: preparation, identification, disposal or retention, and transfer. Depending on the size of the entity and the estimated volume of records to be reviewed and organized, the first three phases must be initiated during pre-closure and completed during liquidation.

D.2 Phase One: Preparation

10. During the preparation phase the D/CMS-CAO-CEO is responsible for appointing a records management and archiving Lead (usually the Chief of the Information Management Unit or Archives Unit), in case this function does not exist during the life of the entity. The records and archives Lead at the mission will be henceforth referred as Chief IMU, he/she will oversee and guide all records and archives management activities, including the training of all offices' Focal Points. The Chief IMU's work must be supported by other Mission staff with some knowledge of UN records management policies and procedures, including information sensitivity; and temporary personnel to provide manual labour. For Missions where the archives and records management function has been aggregated with mail and pouch services, it is highly recommended to separate the two functions during the liquidation. The Chief IMU and his/her team must be able to focus solely on implementing this SOP.
11. The D/CMS-CAO-CEO shall also request all Section Chiefs to appoint Focal Points at the entity's headquarters, in the sectors, and in the Field Technology Service (FTS). FTS is expected to play a critical role in facilitating access to digital records for the Chief IMU's review, as well as their capture and potential transfer to UNHQ as digital archives. The Chief IMU shall advise the D/CMS-CAO-CEO on staffing requirements during closure to support records management activities. In addition, given the staff turnover towards the end of the Mission's mandate, he/she shall conduct ongoing training to ensure that the requisite records management expertise of staff is maintained. He/she is also expected to remain at the Mission throughout the closure. Focal Points must not check-out of the Mission prior to handing over the records of their respective Unit/Section to the Chief IMU, whether they are paper or digital. Alternatively, new Focal Points(s) must be nominated to complete all steps described in this SOP.
12. Missions are recommended to request ARMS to conduct a records management assessment and review specific areas where records could be at risk during the liquidation, particularly in offices which create sensitive content (e.g. human rights, rule of law, child protection and civil affairs) and which may have stored their digital records on external devices in a non-network environment during the life of the entity. In coordination with stakeholders such as DPO and DPPA and in some instances the Office of Legal Affairs (OLA) at UN Headquarters, the Chief IMU shall ensure that when records are subject to handover to the host country, or in the case of a transition, to successor UN bodies (e.g. UN Country Team), the handover meets information management requirements and are consistent with the UN data sharing framework. The mission should produce two copies of the data to be shared with the UNCT; one for the UNCT and one to be kept as a permanent record of the transaction by the mission. The data from which the shared data was derived should be managed according to the records retention policy and either disposed or transferred at mission closure. To protect the data during the data transmittal process, the Chief IMU may also consult OICT to request technical advice on cybersecurity.
13. As a first task, the Chief IMU must develop a records and archives liquidation plan with timelines in accordance with this SOP (Annex 3) for review by ARMS (arms@un.org) at mandate completion.
14. As soon as all Focal Points are identified, the Chief IMU, in coordination with ARMS, shall develop and conduct a training programme to guide all records management and archiving activities. The programme shall be held on a regular basis throughout the mandate completion period and liquidation. The training shall include instructions on separating records from non-records (including for digital records), implementing the Peacekeeping Records Retention Schedule, handling sensitive

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information and preparing the paper records for transfer to Headquarters, including human rights records to OHCHR.

15. Concurrently, the Chief IMU must also contact the Mission's Procurement Office to identify a vendor for archives boxes (details are found in Annex 7) and any other supplies that will be needed; the procurement of the exact number to be purchased can be done upon identification of the records to be shipped to Headquarters or Geneva. The Chief IMU should also ensure that the liquidation plan includes an allotment for shipping human rights records to Geneva in line with Annex 8.
16. At pre-closure, the field entity shall not initiate new records and information management activities such as digitization, vital records identification, data migration from the shared drive to any centrally managed enterprise systems or implement new information management systems. Such projects require resources and training of staff and therefore should be conducted during the life of the field entity. The Chief IMU and the team assigned with records management and archiving duties must solely focus on the identification of records, their disposal or retention and transfer to Headquarters or Geneva.

D.3 Phase Two: Identifying and Inventorying Paper and Digital Records

17. At mandate completion, Focal Points shall identify the records that were created by their Section as its principal business if this was not done during the life of the mission. The paper records, with information about their dates and volume must be recorded in a records inventory (Annex 4) and mapped to the Peacekeeping Records Retention Schedule. All other records, including working copies, drafts, duplicate records and personal records must be disposed. The Chief IMU will review inventories and provide guidance as needed. The Chief IMU shall seek the substantive knowledge from the records creators and consult with ARMS when records found in offices are not covered by the approved retention schedule.
18. The Chief IMU shall send completed inventories to ARMS for review. ARMS will provide input on records retention and disposal depending on their content, format and the context in which they were created.
19. Focal Points in the Mission's Budget and Finance Office shall complete the procedures described above, however, their files must be moved to a separate filing room at the Mission site as they will be handed over to DOS at Headquarters for auditing. The records must subsequently be shipped to Headquarters in a separate container or clearly separated from the rest of the Mission records.
20. All digital records and data in information systems, including UN-maintained applications, shared drives, stand-alone devices, and in some instances in commercial cloud-based storage (e.g. OneDrive, Google Docs) must be inventoried using the Information Asset Register (Annex 5). FTS is required to provide the Chief IMU with appropriate access to the shared drive or the UN cloud storage and any other locally maintained systems. This is to collect data on the scope of the records and information, their estimated volume, date range and to identify non-records. The Information Asset Register should also list the mission's Intranet, its Website(s) and any social media accounts. The Information Asset Register will be a valuable tool to record the change of ownership of all information and data.

D.4 Phase Three: Records Disposal or Retention

21. The Peacekeeping Records Retention Schedule provides all offices in closing entities with full authority to dispose or retain records, whether they are in paper or digital format. The Chief IMU shall provide oversight of all records disposal, packing and transfer activities from the Mission's offices and the Mission's records centre/archives to Headquarters and OHCHR

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22. The records review and implementation of the retention schedule must be completed in substantive offices as a priority, preferably as soon as the mandate completion is confirmed. The Chief IMU must have the required access to all paper and digital records identified in the inventories to advise the Focal Points. It should be noted that all records disposal takes place at the file folder level. Focal points must not pull out individual records or documents from folders, even if they are convenience copies.
23. Paper records which have been identified for disposal must be destroyed securely using shredders. Bulk disposal of paper records, whether it takes place at the Mission site or by external contractors, must be witnessed by a designated Staff Member reporting to the Chief IMU. The disposal must be documented for accountability. Guidance on how to document the activity will be provided by ARMS. The recommended method for disposal of large volumes of paper records is pulping. If pulping is not available in the host country, the records must be shredded using industrial shredders or burned using an industrial incinerator. If the Mission does not have specific arrangements and/or inadequate equipment to perform bulk destruction of sensitive material, the Chief IMU should contact ARMS as soon as possible and seek advice on the best way to securely destroy records. In destroying the records on site, the field entity must be mindful of the 2018.28 Guidelines for Environmental Clearance and Handover of Mission Sites.
24. All sensitive records (e.g. records containing personal data, records from offices such as human rights, rule of law, civil affairs, selected SRSG and DRSG records), including working files containing sensitive information, must be protected at all time throughout the closure process. They must be placed in lockable containers or locked rooms pending their destruction or shipment to UNHQ. The storage room should only be accessible by the IMU and the Closure Team Coordinator. Code cables chronological files created after 2009 should be destroyed in all Mission offices if they can easily be identified, as they should be copies of records located in the Code Cable Repository System. Code cables in the office of the SRSG should be retained as they provide valuable context to other records created by this office. Specific guidance on how to identify sensitive content is available in ST/SGB/2007/6 and the Peacekeeping Information Sensitivity Toolkit.
25. As soon as a field entity's office closes, whether it is a mission's field office or a substantive office, the Chief IMU must review content on its shared drives and on any locally managed systems. The priority is to identify content to be retained and preserved according to the Peacekeeping Records Retention Schedule. IMU and FTS may use the retention schedule to delete any obsolete content if time permits. The Guidance on Managing Records and Information on Shared Drives may also be used to assist with this step. Once IMU has identified the content to be retained, FTS must move eligible records to a secure area of the Mission's network or to designated cloud storage and make them read-only. FTS may create a sub-repository for any newly created records during the liquidation.

D.5 Phase Four: Records Transfer

26. As soon as the mandate completion is confirmed, the records transfer to UNHQ and OHCHR must begin. For a field entity which transitions to a new mandate, all records from discontinued activities that need to be retained for accountability or institutional memory must be transferred to ARMS. The field entity may keep five years' worth of unexpired records on-site for activities which are being pursued under the new mandate (it is necessary to ensure that transfer of custody is documented and implemented). If a successor entity needs to access records that have been transferred to Headquarters, they can be retrieved by ARMS (arms@un.org). Depending on the volume of records requested, ARMS will digitize them or send the boxes back to the Mission.
27. Focal Points are responsible for ensuring that paper records that will be retained according to the Peacekeeping Records Retention Schedule are properly organized in file folders (not binders) and boxes. Folders and boxes must contain records belonging to the same records category; and thus,

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with the same retention period.

28. For the transfer of paper records, ARMS issues box labels bearing barcode numbers. They are used for tracking the boxes once they are received at Headquarters. ARMS will also issue an accession control form to the liquidation team, which serves as a notification that the transfer of custody between the field entity and ARMS has taken place. This form can also be made available to the successor entity, should there be a requirement to access records and information from the closing mission.
29. As soon as the Chief IMU has an indication of the volume of paper records to be shipped to Headquarters, the Movement Control Section (MovCon) must be notified with the required number of shipping containers to be rented. Twenty-foot containers can usually accommodate approximately 350 boxes. The field entity shall instruct the freight forwarding company to send the original bill of lading to New York, which is necessary for the United States Customs to release the containers. Specific instructions are found in Annex 7. When the shipment is ready to be sent, the field entity shall inform ARMS.
30. While a field entity's offices must always transfer their inactive paper files to their Information Management/Archiving Unit during the life of the Mission, it is expected that field entities offices will still have records in their possession at the time of closure. If this is the case, records which are eligible for transfer must be sent to ARMS by the Focal Points via the Chief IMU and ensure that records are transferred in accordance with the Guidelines in Annex 6.
31. With respect to the transfer of digital records, the objective is to follow the same principles as for the paper and to ensure their integrity, authenticity, and long-term accessibility as technology changes. This requires an assessment of the environment in which they are stored, their format, and whether they will be subject to future access or not. Therefore, the IMU should initiate a dialogue with ARMS and OICT's Information Management Team on the appropriate approach.

E. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Director/Chief of Mission Support (D/CMS) or Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) or Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

As Head of the Closure Team, he/she oversees and is accountable for the secure liquidation of all information, including records in all formats. The D/CMS supports the work of records management staff by providing adequate staffing for records management activities, access to funding for shipping records to UNHQ, and for a pre-liquidation advisory mission by ARMS. The D/CMS must allocate resources (e.g. secure facilities; equipment to dispose of records) to ensure that all sensitive information is protected during liquidation.

Chief Information Management Unit (Chief IMU)

The Chief IMU oversees all records management activities during liquidation. He/she serves as a point of contact for ARMS and provides ARMS with a copy of the Mission's liquidation plan and timeline as well as regular updates and information on the adherence to all procedures throughout the liquidation. The Chief IMU will have the delegated authority from the Head of the D/CMS to coordinate all records and archives activities for paper and digital records. She/he supervises the work of other records and information assistants as well as independent contractors (ICs) and provides training and briefing to all Focal Points and the Mission's management, as required. The Chief IMU is responsible for the secure disposal of records and their protection during liquidation.

Mission Records Management Focal Point(s)

Records Management Focal Points are appointed by all Mission's Section Chiefs and implement all disposition activities for records held in their respective offices. They also liaise on an ongoing basis with the Chief IMU.

Field Technology Service (FTS)

FTS shall appoint a Focal Point to work collaboratively with the Chief IMU. The FTS Focal Point shall provide the Chief IMU with access to all records located on shared drives and to any locally managed information systems. In coordination with the Chief IMU, FTS shall move digital records identified for preservation to the UNGSC cloud storage where they will be later captured and preserved as digital archives of United Nations Field Operations.

Archives and Records Management Section (ARMS)

ARMS is the point of contact for records management at the United Nations Headquarters. ARMS is responsible for addressing all records management questions encountered by field entities. It also conducts training and provides advice on implementing this SOP. It provides on-site Mission assistance, including to support the capture of digital records.

Office for Information and Communication Technology (OICT)

The Office of Information Communication Technology (OICT) manages the Secretariat's enterprise information systems and central data storage for all field operations. The Policy, Strategy and Governance Division's Information Management Team issues global United Nations policy, guidance, and compliance requirements for information management, including digital records management.

F. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Disposition	A range of processes associated with implementing records/information retention, destruction, or transfer decisions that are documented in the records retention and disposition schedule or other authority.
File Plan	A plan or scheme developed by an Office, Department or an organization to arrange distinct types of files.
Non-record	A "non-record" is any document or item, regardless of physical form or characteristic, created or received that does not document the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the office.
Records	Information created, received, and maintained as evidence and as an asset by the United Nations, in pursuit of its legal obligations, activities, or in the transaction of business.
Retention schedule	An instruction covering the disposition of records to ensure that they are retained for as long as necessary based on their administrative, fiscal, legal, historical or informational value and disposed or held as archives accordingly.
Shared drives	Shared drives, also known as network drives, or file shares, are typically used to store, access, and share digital content such as documents, images, audio, video, spreadsheets, presentations, and databases.

G. REFERENCES

Normative or superior references

ST/SGB/2007/5 on Record-keeping and the Management of United Nations Archives
ST/SGB/2007/6 on Information sensitivity, Classification and Handling

Related procedures or guidelines

2018.08 Guide for Senior Leadership on Field Entity Closure
2016.11 Policy on Strategic Communication and Public Information
2015 Peacekeeping Records Retention Schedule
2015 Managing Electronic Information and Records in Shared Drives

See also on Policy and Practice Database (ppdb.un.org):
SOP on information filing, labelling and clean-up
SOP on managing information on shared drives

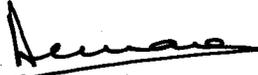
H. MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE

Compliance with this SOP shall be monitored by DOS.

I. CONTACT

United Nations Archives and Records Management Section (ARMS)
United Nations Headquarters
ARMS e-mail contact: arms@un.org

APPROVAL SIGNATURE: Mr. Atul Khare



Under-Secretary-General for Operational Support
Department of Operational Support (DOS)

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