

Annex 8: Transfer of Human Rights Records

Guidance Note: Transfer of OHCHR Records to the Archives in Geneva

1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to the entire Office, on the transfer of OHCHR archival records to the designated archives.

2. UN guidelines for archiving of records

Section 3.3, 4.1 and 4.3 of the ST/SGB/2007/5 on Record-keeping and the management of United Nations archives provide rules as follows:

3.3 Prior to separation from service, staff members shall make arrangements for Transferring to the Archives and Records Management Section or to the office with Delegated authority, those records in their possession which are no longer required For business purposes and shall not remove any records from United Nations Premises. The Chief of the Archives and Records Management Section may provide advice regarding the records of a staff member prior to separation from service. Staff members shall be entitled to have a reasonable number of unrestricted records Copied at their own expense and to retain their private papers. Guidelines Concerning the separation of private papers from business records are set out in the Annex to the present bulletin.

4.1 Departments and offices shall develop and implement a policy regarding the Retention of their records, including transitory records, through records retention Schedule subject to approval by the Archives and Records Management Section. Records retention schedules shall provide for accountable and transparent recordkeeping. Insofar as they shall identify minimum retention periods for records to Meet administrative, fiscal and legal requirements; they shall also identify records to Be retained as archives of the Organization. United Nations records that are not Covered by an approved retention policy must not be destroyed.

4.2 Prior to transferring their records to the Archives and Records Management Section, departments and offices shall prepare them for transfer in accordance with The format established by the Chief of the Archives and Records Management Section.

2.1 Retention Schedule

The retention schedule helps to determine which records are archival because they have permanent value i.e. administrative, fiscal, legal or historical importance. Contact

your Records Management Team for the retention schedule of your organisational unit.

3 Archival Transfer Process

Follow the steps outlined below to archive permanent paper records which are no longer active.

3.1 Arrange/organise by Series

Arrange the files by series in chronological order starting from the oldest to the most recent.

Example of a record series: Sessional files, Communications, Government Replies, G-Docs, Working Group on Communications, Recruitment, Internship, Financial authorizations, Expressions of Interest etc.

3.2 Clean-Up

Using the retention schedule and the guidance note on implementing the retention schedule, clean out, the following, from the series identified as permanent:

- a. Draft correspondences and reports which are not final versions or evolutionary drafts
- b. Working copies of record for which the organisational unit is not the office of records.
- c. Personal working files kept to keep track of progression of activities
- d. Chrono copies of correspondence or documentation if the original exists somewhere else
- e. E-mail files that serve as notification or for information only, e.g. notice of meetings, staff messaging notices, copy and blind copy e-mails. Those e-mails conveying instructions, directives, policies and decisions which fall under series identified as permanent in the retention schedule must be printed and prepared for transfer as well.
- f. Publications, reports and documentation received from other organisations or civil society which is not submitted directly in support of OHCHR activities or Human Rights mechanisms.
- g. Official documents kept as reference or by organisational units which are not secretariats to any human rights mechanisms. For secretariats providing operational support to mechanisms including but not limited to the Treaty bodies, Human Rights Council and its organs, official documents for archiving must be supported by other records of the activities of the mechanisms. Files

containing purely official documents will not be accepted for transfer. The UNOG Library is the custodian of official documents.

- h. Remove documents which are damp, or at risk of mould, rid the documents of dust, mould and office equipment which may cause rust, e.g. rubber band, staples and metal clips.

3.3 *Inventory*

Use the archives transfer inventory template to list the files for transfer according to the record series, indicating the office of origin, the record series, and the classification level. Use a separate inventory for each file series. (This applies to the paper records only). For folders/binders that are labelled, enter the inscription on the label in the description column. For files that have no title or labels, browse through the content to provide a description for the collection.

3.4 *Packaging*

Following meticulously, the order in the inventory, pack the records into standard archival boxes and mark the box number against the entry made for each record. Archival boxes must offer protection from light, dampness and must be acid-free. (Check with the Records Management Team for the specification).

3.5 *Batch or ARR Number*

Double-check the box number and the description entry made against each file, then send an e-mail request for a batch number (known as ARR number), to your Records Management Team. Attach the inventory to your request. The batch number is a unique identifying number attached to the collection and is used as a finding aid in future to locate the collection or transfer. Enter the batch number, when received in the appropriate column in the inventory. For field offices, the archival boxes must be packed into cartons, labelled with the UN Logo, ask the Records Management Team for the labels. An inventory of the contents of each carton must be taken and sent to the Records Management Team.

3.6 *Transfers to Archives*

For organisational units based in Geneva, contact the Records Management Team to make arrangement for transfer to the archives. For field offices, arrangement for shipment will be made locally by the field office concerned. Transfer may be made by air or through the diplomatic pouch, if the services exist in the location. Usually, UNDP provides such services. There are specifications for the size of the shipment, please contact the Records Management Team for it. **Transfers from the field are to be addressed to: Ms Sylvie Carlon-Riera, Institutional Memory Section, Door 30, United**

Nations Office at Geneva, Avenue de la Paix 8 – 14, Geneva, CH-1211 Geneva 10 Switzerland.

Note to Field Offices: The archives of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights are managed by the Institutional Memory Section at the United Nations Office at Geneva therefore all archives from the field including the New York office and the archival records of the substantive activities of Human Rights Component in Peace and Political missions at closure must be transferred to Geneva.

3.7 *Guidance documentation*

This guidance note is to be consulted together with the relevant Retention Schedule and the guidance note for the implementation of the retention schedule. For copies, please contact the Records Management Team. See contact details below.

3.8 *Archiving of electronic records*

Electronic files with permanent value should be archived in UniteDocs where possible for organisational units whose file plan has been configured in the UniteDocs System. For organisational units which are closing down, archival records must be organised according to the file plan and put on a hard disk and handed over to the authorised units in OHCHR Geneva for future transfer into UniteDocs. The process of configuration is on-going; please contact the Records Management Team to find out where your unit is in the configuration schedule.

Contact your records management's team for more information.

Tolulope Olowoye, tolowoye@ohchr.org; Tel: [+41 22 917 91 11](tel:+41229179111)

And

Kim Mahoney, kmahoney@ohchr.org; Tel: [+41 22 917 92 52](tel:+41229179252)

Annex 1

Glossary of Terms (UNARMS Glossary of Recordkeeping Terms)

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| Appraisal: | The process of establishing the value of a record in order to establish retention periods. |
| Archives: | The records and materials appraised to have archival or permanent value to the work of the organisation. It also refers to the physical place where these records and materials are stored for permanent preservation. |
| Archival Records: | Records considered as having permanent value, because of their administrative, fiscal, legal or historical importance and which are to be preserved permanently even when they are no longer actively supporting the work of the Office. |
| Destruction: | The act of permanently disposing of records. |
| Disposal: | Destruction of records that are no longer needed to support on-going activities of the Office. |
| Disposition: | The action taken with regard to non-current records which may be either transfer to archival storage or destruction. |
| Electronic Records: | Records created or communicated and maintained through electronic or digital systems. They must be evidence of official/business transactions of the Office. |
| File Plan: | A plan developed by an office to organise and arrange different types of files. |
| File or Record Series: | A group of similar records which are related or used in the same activities arranged according to a filing system. (SAA Glossary of Terms). |
| Inventory: | A descriptive list of files detailing the office of origin, classification, series, and title of files usually in chronological order (by date). |
| Office of Record: | The organizational unit with the official responsibility for the maintenance, preservation and disposition of record (official) copies. |
| Official Document: | The official publications of the United Nations. |

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| Record: | Any data or information, regardless of form or medium, maintained by the United Nations as evidence of a transaction. |
| Retention Period | The length of time designated for a record/file series to be kept before destruction or transfer to the archives. |
| Retention Schedule: | A comprehensive instruction developed by the office to determine the disposition of records to ensure they are kept for as long as necessary. |
| Substantive Records: | Records related to the core activities of the Office i.e. those activities which are unique to the Office. |
| Transitory Records: | Records required for only a limited time to ensure the completion of a routine action or the preparation of a subsequent record. E.g. staff messaging, e-mails, notice of meetings etc. |
| UniteDocs: | The UN Secretariat-approved Content Management System for Recordkeeping and Archiving. |