

Agenda Item 8

Any other Business

Document 8-01

Draft ASCOBANS Style Guide

Action Requested

- Consider the draft Style Guide prepared by the Working Group
- Comment
- Endorse the Style Guide for use in Advisory Committee Reports

Submitted by

Working Group



NOTE:
IN THE INTERESTS OF ECONOMY, DELEGATES ARE KINDLY REMINDED TO BRING THEIR
OWN COPIES OF DOCUMENTS TO THE MEETING

Secretariat's Note

1. AC16 decided that a working group consisting of Belgium, Denmark, Poland, WDCCS and the Secretariat would produce a draft Style Guide for ASCOBANS, which should be considered and endorsed at AC17.
2. The Secretariat prepared a first draft and circulated it to the members of the working group on 16 February 2010. A revised version, taking into account all comments received by 10 March, was circulated for final comments on 12 March. No further comments were received.

Draft ASCOBANS Style Guide

(based on the United Nations Editorial Manual)

1. Language to be used in ASCOBANS Advisory Committee Reports

1.1 Spelling

- The *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, 11th edition (New York, Oxford University Press, 2004) is the spelling authority consulted for all ASCOBANS reports.
- When a word has more than one spelling, the first spelling of that word should always be used.
- The foreign words listed in the eleventh edition of the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* are not italicized. Foreign words not listed in that edition should be italicized.
- Non-English names of organizations, firms, ministries and the like are not italicized.
- Relevant spelling examples:

analyse; above-mentioned; by-catch; cooperation; coordination; counteract; death rate; decision maker; decision-making (noun and adj.); data set; ecosystem; enquire, enquiry (referring to a request for information); finalize; fund-raising; harbour; intergovernmental; offshore; on site (adv.); on-site (adj.); organization; principal (first in rank) (noun and adj.); principle (fundamental truth) (noun); policymaker; reallocate; re-examine; stakeholder; summarize; timetable; utilize; workforce

1.2 Punctuation

- An apostrophe ('s or s') should not be used with an abbreviation or acronym, the name of a country, or the name of an organization.
Examples: the Government of Germany; United Nations Headquarters; the Convention on Migratory Species "Year of..." campaigns
- The final comma before *and* is not normally used in United Nations documents.
Exception: When a paragraph contains several distinct decisions of ASCOBANS, each introduced by a verb, these are separated by commas.
- A comma is not necessary after *in particular* if it separates the phrase from the person or thing to which it applies.
- A semicolon should be used at the end of a subparagraph, both in resolutions and in reports.
- With bullets, the preferred style is no punctuation or a full stop.
- Quoted words, sentences and paragraphs are enclosed within double quotation marks.
- Single quotation marks are used to enclose quotations within quotations.
- Three ellipsis points (dots) are used to mark omissions within a quotation. It is not normally necessary to use ellipsis points for omissions at the beginning or end of a quotation.
- The *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, 11th edition, appendix 10 may be consulted for basic English punctuation rules.

1.3 Reported Speech

- Reported speech (past tense) should be used in all proceedings reports to convey what was discussed during meetings.

Example:

- ➔ *During the meeting:* “All ASCOBANS Parties of the Baltic Sea region are participating in the project.”
- ➔ *In the report:* XXX reported that all ASCOBANS Parties of the Baltic Sea region were participating in the project.

- A reporting clause should be added in a report to convey whom a statement/idea belongs to as well as to signal the start of reported speech. The form to be used is: first name last name (country) or, if the same speaker is referred to in the following paragraph: Mr/Ms XYZ.
- Subsequent sentences pertaining to the first reporting clause do not need to include additional reporting clauses.
- Conclusions and recommendations put forth by the body should be in direct speech (present tense).
- Conclusions and recommendations put forth by the body should be indicated at the end of the report on each agenda item.
- Points for Action arising from the meeting should be included at the start of a report.

2. Drafting Guidelines to be used for ASCOBANS Advisory Committee Reports

2.1 Level of Detail

- Reports should be action-oriented, containing:
 - a) A brief discussion on organizational and procedural matters.
 - b) Recommendations, including resolutions and decisions adopted and draft resolutions and decisions recommended for adoption by the parent body.
 - c) Policy recommendations emanating from expert groups, panels, round tables and multi-stakeholder dialogues.
 - d) New developments, findings and recommendations, particularly for recurrent reports.
- The report will include the items discussed, a shortened version of what was stated during the discussions, and the final outcome/decisions of the discussed item.

This means that not every statement made is recorded. Instead a brief summary is used to convey the substance of the discussion along with the outcome of the summarized discussion.¹ However, participants can request the inclusion of specific interventions in

¹ It should be noted that the official UN guidelines suggest a stricter selection of statements to be included in the report (please see http://69.94.137.26/editorialcontrol/ed-guidelines/types_documents/reports_intergov_bodies.htm):

Reports should not include:

1. A summary of statements made at opening and closing meetings, unless pertinent to the conclusion reached.
2. Summaries of statements by individuals; a list of speakers for each item can be included instead.
3. A general summary of statements under each item.
4. Analysis of information provided, unless required to support policy findings.
5. A lengthy discussion of organizational and procedural matters.
6. Repetition of already published texts or repetition of texts with only minor changes; an exception is made for draft resolutions that are submitted to an intergovernmental body but not adopted, since such texts are needed for the parliamentary record.
7. Quotations from United Nations documents, unless legislative authority is being cited.
8. Extraneous information that does not contribute to deliberations.

the report. Participants should highlight this in their statement and where appropriate provide text to the report writer.

- Documents presented in context of a discussion will not be summarized. The report will only contain information on the presenter and the subject of the document.

Exception: More space may be given in the report if the document does not include the conclusions drawn by the presenter during the presentation.

2.2 Timing of Report Distribution

The Agreement budget does not provide sufficient funds for providing more than one report writer at each meeting of the Advisory Committee. In order to allow the single report writer sufficient rest during the meeting to be able to discharge his/her functions with the desired level of quality, overnight report production is not feasible.² Overnight report production will only be considered a realistic option if Parties make the funds for a sufficiently large team of report writers available several months before the meeting in question.

Provided only one report writer is hired for the meeting, the following provisions shall apply:

- On the last day of the meeting a short list of Points for Action and recommendations of the meeting will be circulated for approval/comment.
- After receiving initial comments from the chair and vice-chair of the meeting, a full final draft report will be circulated to all participants within two weeks after the closure of the meeting for approval/comment by email correspondence.
- Participants will be given at least one month time to comment on the report, after which the Secretariat will finalise and publish the document as soon as possible.
- In case of conflicting comments, the Secretariat in consultation with the chair and vice-chair of the meeting retains the right to decide on the final wording. Comments made by the owner of a statement will be given priority over those from others relating to the same point.

In case of any future questions or conflicts the official United Nations Editorial Manual should be consulted as the final authority online at:

<http://69.94.137.26/editorialcontrol/index.htm>

² Please note the official conditions of service for UN report writers (Professional Code – Annex, available online at <http://www.aitc.ch/modules.php?name=Content&pa=showpage&pid=13&page=1>):

LENGTH OF WORKING WEEK

Rule 4 - The length of the working week shall not exceed 40 hours spread over 5 or 6 days. If, owing to unforeseen circumstances, translators are called upon to work longer, they shall receive compensation in the form of either time off or remuneration for an equivalent length of time at the end of the contract.

PREPARATION OF SUMMARY RECORDS

Rule 5 - The précis-writer shall insist on being allowed reasonable time to prepare the record.

Except in the case of minutes, the team responsible for the record of a meeting lasting between two and three hours shall not consist of fewer than three précis-writers; the taking of notes and the subsequent drafting of the record represent at least a full day's work for each of the précis-writers concerned.

The period of the précis-writers' note-taking shall be reduced when the subject matter is particularly difficult or when the speakers read prepared statements at speed. The précis-writers shall be provided with copies of written statements.

The team or a part of it, as appropriate, shall be replaced when a meeting lasts for more than three hours.