

# Editing of resolutions at the United Nations



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# The editing process

The **Editing Section** edits all United Nations documents, including draft resolutions, to make them:

- Clear
- Accurate
- Consistent
- Grammatically correct
- In conformity with United Nations standards
- Translatable into the other five official languages



# The editing process

Editors will not make changes that alter the meaning of a resolution

- When a language issue touches on a substantive matter, the editor will consult
- It is crucial for the editors to be informed of any passages that have been closely negotiated or are otherwise highly sensitive



# Draft resolutions

All draft resolutions are submitted to DGACM for editing, translation, typing, proofreading and printing.

Draft resolutions are normally processed by DGACM within **48 hours** of submission.



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# Draft resolutions

The short turnaround time means that:

- The contact information of the main sponsor or facilitator is needed
- For draft resolutions based on a previous resolution, the adopted text (with the symbol A/RES/xx/xx) should be downloaded from ODS and used as the basis for preparation of the new resolution



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# Final resolutions

## Final review process

- After adoption, the final review process ensures accuracy and concordance among all six language versions
- Changes made by delegates at the time of adoption, if any, are incorporated into the text
- The finalized resolutions are issued with **A/RES/xx/xxx** symbols



# Why is it important for resolutions to be edited?

- They are important **international instruments**
- The **time pressure** of negotiation and processing can lead to mistakes
- **Ambiguous language** in the original can result in different interpretations in the other languages
- Editing ensures that the **principle of multilingualism** is respected



# The structure of resolutions

## Paragraphs

Resolutions are essentially one long sentence with three elements:

- The name of the organ (the General Assembly)
- Preambular paragraphs
- Operative paragraphs





# Structure

## Subparagraphs

- Subparagraphs are lettered (a), (b), (c)
- Each subparagraph begins with a capital letter
- The subparagraphs must have a similar structure



# Structure

## Subparagraphs

An example of proper parallel subparagraph structure (from resolution 66/167):

6. *Calls upon* all States:

- (a) To take effective measures to ensure... (b)  
To foster religious freedom and pluralism...
- (c) To encourage the representation of...
- (d) To make a strong effort to...



# Subparagraphs

Another good example of proper subparagraph structure (from resolution 66/94):

10. *Reaffirms* the importance...of the work of the Commission ... and in this connection:

- (a) Welcomes the initiatives of the Commission...
- (b) Expresses its appreciation to the Commission...
- (c) Takes note with interest of the comprehensive approach...
- (d) Expresses its appreciation to the Governments...



# Changes that editors make to resolutions

Editors will:

- Check and correct titles and facts
- Correct grammar and syntax
- Correct, add or delete footnotes
- Make minor adjustments to style to bring the text in line with UN editorial standards and to make the text translatable



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# Common corrections

## Titles of bodies, meetings, conventions

- Titles will be checked and corrected
- The full title will be used at first mention in both the preamble and the operative part  
Thereafter a shortened version may be used



# Common corrections

## Titles of bodies, meetings, conventions

Example from resolution 67/184:

2. *Notes* the progress made thus far in the preparations for the Thirteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice;

3. *Decides* that the duration of the Thirteenth Congress should not exceed eight days;



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# Common corrections

## Acronyms

Acronyms will be spelled out in full the first time they occur in both the preamble and the operative part. Thereafter, a shortened version of the title may be used.



# Common corrections

## Dates

Dates of meetings, adoption of conventions, declarations, etc., will be checked and corrected if necessary.



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# Common corrections

## Names of countries

In United Nations documents and resolutions, the short form of the names of countries is used.

For a list of the official short names of countries see [untermportal.un.org](http://untermportal.un.org).



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# Common corrections

## Names of cities

Names of cities are followed by the country name, unless the city is the capital.



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# Common corrections

## Punctuation

Editors are experts in punctuation issues and will apply United Nations style.

If a punctuation mark becomes a matter of political sensitivity, the editors should be informed to ensure that it is not modified for grammatical reasons.



# Common corrections

## Avoiding personification

A resolution or report does not decide/recommend/launch/convene/extend a mandate, etc.; it is the author or body adopting the resolution or report that takes the action.



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# Common corrections

## Avoiding personification

Example:

“General Assembly resolution 65/14 requested the Secretary-General to report...”

will be changed to read:

“The General Assembly, in its resolution 65/14, requested the Secretary-General to report...”



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# Common corrections

## Notes/Takes note

- **Notes** is used in the sense of “observes”.
- **Takes note** is used when the object is a report, statement or decision. A body should not take note of (or welcome) its own past decision.



# Common corrections

## Reiterates

If the General Assembly “reiterates” something, it means that it is repeating something it said in a previous resolution.

Otherwise, a more appropriate verb, such as “affirms”, “stresses” or “emphasizes” should be used.



# Common corrections

## Reiterates

If “reiterates” is used, some context must be given. Example from resolution 67/246:

6. *Reiterates* that accountability is a central pillar of effective and efficient management that requires attention and strong commitment at the highest level of the Secretariat, as defined in paragraph 8 of its resolution 64/259 of 29 March 2010;



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# Common corrections

## Reiterates

If the Assembly does not wish to provide context the verb “reaffirms” may be used:

*Reaffirms* paragraph 37 of its resolution 62/87 and paragraph 2 of its resolution 64/228,



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# Common corrections

## Footnotes

Source footnotes may be added, deleted or updated during the editing process, in consultation with the author.



# Common corrections

## Seasons of the year

Since seasons of the year are different in different hemispheres, the editor will change a reference to “the summer of 2014”, for example, to “the third quarter of 2014”.



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# Common corrections

## Including, inter alia

The use of “including” together with “inter alia” is redundant. The editor will delete one of them, as appropriate.



# Editorial helpdesk and other resources

Editors are available to offer assistance and advice:

[etesfrontdesk@un.org](mailto:etesfrontdesk@un.org)

(212) 963-2528



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# Other resources

- United Nations Editorial Manual Online ([www.un.org/dgacm/en/content/editorial-manual](http://www.un.org/dgacm/en/content/editorial-manual))
- UNTERM ([unterm.un.org](http://unterm.un.org))
- Official Document System (<https://documents.un.org>; also available at [ods.un.org](http://ods.un.org))



# Questions or comments?

Please write to [kelly1@un.org](mailto:kelly1@un.org)



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