Editing of resolutions at the United Nations
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.
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
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
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
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;*
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.
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.
Names of cities
Names of cities are followed by the country name, unless the city is the capital.
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.
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...”
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;
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,
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”.

United Nations
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
(212) 963-2528
Other resources

• UNTERM (unterm.un.org)
• Official Document System (https://documents.un.org; also available at ods.un.org)
Questions or comments?

Please write to kelly1@un.org