



## **Records management: principles and practices**

*Manual of procedures*

Records Management: Manual of procedures  
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## Glossary

<b>Action officers</b>	These are staff whose role is to create or take action on the records created or received from other staff or organizations. In other words, Action Officers are users of records.
<b>Archival facility</b>	Archive is a building that provide a proper environment for storing records and materials that require permanent protection for historic and lifetime storage, upkeep, and preservation.
<b>Ephemeral records</b>	Ephemera (also referred to as transitory) records are records, which have only short-term value to the organization with little or no ongoing administrative, fiscal, legal, evidential, or historical value. The term also applies to records, which are insignificant for business purposes, and those kept for personal reference.
<b>File classification scheme</b>	File classification scheme (also referred to as File plan) is the process of identifying the category or categories of business activities and the records they generate and grouping them, if applicable, into files to facilitate retrieval, description, control, links and determine their disposition and access status. Folder structure that classifies and groups documents and records with the same characteristics together (physical or electronic). Documents and records should be grouped together according to the functions, activities and tasks that they support.
<b>Folio</b>	A folio is a document that is made up of either a single page or multiple pages. For multi-page folios, the contained pages within the folio are called enclosures.
<b>Office of record</b>	The organization or administrative unit that is officially designated for the maintenance, preservation, and disposition of record copies. The office of record is not always the office of origin of the record.
<b>Retention schedules</b>	A list of records series of an organization with directions for how the records are to be disposed of after their creation and initial use. A schedule is a written statement of how long each series, or group of series, is to be kept (e.g. a period of years, until an action has been completed, or indefinitely) and may include instructions on when records are to be transferred to archives or destroyed.
	Retention schedules are policy documents, which ensure compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements.
<b>Records centre</b>	Records centre is a building or part of a building designed or adapted for the low-cost storage, maintenance and

communication of semi-current records pending their ultimate disposal. The function of the records centre is to hold semi-current records and make available for use until the date of their disposal.

**Registry (record office)**

The administrative unit responsible for the maintenance, preservation and disposition of official records. A registry is run by staff tasked with the centralized creation and management of files (including storage and tracking). A records office is responsible for managing all the current records created and used by action officers within the office.

**Records appraisal**

Appraisal is the process of distinguishing records of continuing value from those of no further value so that the latter may be eliminated. Records can possess different types or degrees of value to an organization, which will affect how long collections need to be kept.

**Vital records**

These are records crucial to the conduct of an organization's business, without which an organization could not continue to operate for example in the event that flood, fire, bombing or another disaster destroyed all other records.

## **Foreword**

The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) is one of the five regional commissions of the United Nations. It was established in 1958 to promote the economic and social development of its member States, foster intraregional integration and promote international cooperation for Africa's development. In fulfilling its mandate, ECA is required to deliver high-quality services to its internal and external clients. Its ability to do so depends on how well relevant information and records which are needed to make decisions in pursuit of its business objectives can be created, stored, retrieved, used and managed.

Well-managed and well-maintained archives and records allow the Commission to apply lessons learned, provide evidence of what has been done and why certain decisions are made, ensure accountability and transparency of actions and decisions taken over time, identify and manage records containing administrative, legal and fiscal values, and provide a basis for research. Vital records are also retained to ensure that, in the event of disaster, the Commission will be able to resume business and maintain its legal and financial position and those of its staff members, member States and other stakeholders.

The ECA business entities are, however, faced with serious challenges in managing records and other information resources. This restrains the Commission's endeavours to be a more rigorous and responsive centre of excellence in support of Africa's transformative agenda. It has become important to give explicit consideration to the management of records and information as a valuable asset by introducing and implementing archives and records management arrangements not only in order to preserve institutional memory and substantive knowledge, but also to maximize the expected efficiency benefits of enhanced archives and records management practices in the Commission's areas of work (administrative, normative and substantive), as well as the potential related financial savings.

To ensure that significant progress is made in the effective functioning of the archives and records management programme, we require a long-term corporate commitment from each office and senior management in ensuring that the established framework for archives and records management is adopted, embraced and implemented at all levels, including the level of investment needed to build internal capacity and appropriate tools. This investment is worthwhile given the potential medium-term and long-term benefits, such as enhancement of substantive work, efficiency gains and savings in personnel.

This Manual provides knowledge and guidance that I urge all staff, consultants, fellows and interns to adhere to in discharging their records and information management responsibilities in accordance with the requirements of United Nations policy.

Jimmy Ocitti  
*Director,*  
*Public Information and Knowledge Management Division*

## **I. Context**

### **A. Introduction**

1. No organization could survive without written records. Without them, all organized administration would quickly come to a halt. Because records are so important, they must be effectively managed at all stages of their existence, from creation to eventual disposition. Documentary evidence provides the framework for accountability and transparency, which is the cornerstone for the efficient and effective implementation of the organization's substantive and normative activities.

### **B. Purpose and scope of the manual**

2. This manual has been developed:

(a) To help staff understand the records management principles applicable to the records they create and receive, and help them to manage the information in a secure and efficient manner;

(b) To provide clear instructions and resources to manage the record-keeping function at all stages of the Commission's operations;

(c) To make sure that the policies and principles of records management are clear to all staff and that there is a transparent and comprehensive set of policies, procedures and guidance that staff can and should follow to achieve effective records management at a consistent standard across the Commission.

3. The manual is intended for all staff, records coordinators and information management assistants, consultants, fellows and interns.

4. These guidelines should be used in conjunction with other resources available to support record-keeping requirements, including the ECA records management policy, the file classification scheme, the retention and disposal schedules, the information security policy and records management standards and guidelines.

### **C. Contact information**

For further information, contact the section/unit responsible for records management function at ECA. **Email:** [eca-armcentralregistry-hq@un.org](mailto:eca-armcentralregistry-hq@un.org)

## **II. ECA records management programme**

5. The purpose of the ECA records management programme is to:

(a) Establish and endorse an institutional framework including policies and guidelines and operational procedures that promote the proper development, management, preservation and disposal of the Commission's administrative records in all formats;

(b) Establish an archives and records management strategy for the Commission's

administrative records incorporating the capture of the past, current and future records in print, electronic and audiovisual formats;

(c) Implement an integrated records management system that captures, manages, disposes of and makes accessible all ECA records, both in print and digital format;

(d) Consolidate the interdivisional/sectional activities associated with records creation, management and preservation into one common workflow.

6. A comprehensive records management programme for ECA will help to:

(a) Determine what records should be created in each business process and what information needs to be included in the records;

(b) Decide in what form and structure records should be created and captured and the technologies to be used;

(c) Determine what metadata should be created with the record and through records processes and how the metadata will be persistently linked and managed;

(d) Determine requirements for retrieving, using and transmitting records between business processes and other users, and how long they need to be kept to satisfy those requirements;

(e) Decide how to organize records so as to support requirements for use;

(f) Assess the risks that would be incurred as a result of failure to have authoritative records of activity;

(g) Preserve records and make them accessible over time in order to meet business requirements and community expectations;

(h) Comply with legal and regulatory requirements, applicable standards and organizational policy;

(i) Ensure that records are maintained in a safe and secure environment;

(j) Ensure that records are retained only for as long as needed or required;

(k) Identify and evaluate opportunities for improving the effectiveness, efficiency or quality of its processes, decisions and actions that could result from better records creation or management.

## **1. Legislation and regulatory framework governing the ECA records management programme**

7. The ECA records management function is directed by legislation and a regulatory framework, which are consistent with the following policy statement:

“ECA must have a framework in place that ensures the creation, capture and maintenance of adequate records for business conduct. The framework should be planned, [adequately] resourced and made known to all staff”.<sup>1</sup>

8. The Commission is required to adhere to this policy requirement and provide adequate evidence of its compliance in the records of its activities.<sup>2</sup> The legislation and the regulatory framework include the following:

- Secretary-General’s bulletin – Record-keeping and the management of United Nations archives (ST/SGB/2007/5)
- Secretary-General’s bulletin – Information sensitivity, classification and handling (ST/SGB/2007/6)
- Secretary-General’s bulletin – Use of information and communication technology resources and data (ST/SGB/2004/15)
- ECA records management policy, version 2.0, August 2017
- Records retention and disposal policy (currently under review)
- Information security policy (under development)
- EECA file classification scheme for administrative functions, November 2012
- Records management: principles and practices (the present manual)
- Records management guidelines
- Records management standards (under development).

9. The Commission’s records management legislation acknowledges that records management follows a life cycle and the care of records should follow a continuum.

## **2. Records management policy**

10. The ECA records management policy outlines the principles, practices and procedures for the management of the Commission’s records. It conveys the management’s intent at a high level as to “what is required” and an outline of the programme and procedures that will achieve those intentions.<sup>3</sup> The policy:

- (a) Enables the implementation of a comprehensive records management programme with procedures, standards and guidelines that ensure the creation and management of authentic, reliable and usable records which are capable of supporting business functions and activities for as long as required;

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<sup>1</sup> ECA records management policy, para. 2.1.

<sup>2</sup> International Organization for Standardization. Information and documentation – Records management – Part 1: General. ISO 15489-1 (first edition, 2001), section 5. Available from <http://www.wgarm.net/ccarm/docs-repository/doc/doc402817.PDF>.

<sup>3</sup> International Organization for Standardization. Information and documentation – Records Management – Part 2: Guidelines (Technical report). ISO/TR 15489-2 (first edition, 2001), p.1.

(b) Ensures the availability of the necessary information to form or reconstruct activities or transactions that have taken place;

(c) Helps to identify, preserve and provide access to archives that have continuing or permanent value for research, educational, cultural and other related purposes and are legally disposed of in accordance with legislative requirements;

(d) Emphasizes records management responsibilities by defining and assigning the responsibilities for overseeing policy and programme implementation, and promulgates such responsibilities within the Commission so that it is clear who is responsible for taking the necessary actions regarding records management.

### **3. Records management responsibilities**

11. The ECA records management policy sets out records management responsibilities at all levels so that it is clear who is responsible for taking the necessary actions about records management.<sup>4</sup> Staff in the Commission’s units, sections, divisions, and subregional offices, as well as the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning, are required to carry out their business in an accountable, transparent and efficient manner.

12. All staff have an important role to play in ensuring that adequate and reliable records are created and maintained for as long as they are required to support the Commission’s work and to provide evidence and a body of historical records.

13. Staff responsibilities in the management of records are stipulated in the ECA records management policy, which is in line with Secretary-General’s bulletin ST/SGB/2007/5 on record-keeping and the management of United Nations archives, and international standard on “Information and documentation – Records management”.

### **Responsibilities of senior management**

The role of the senior management is to:

(a) Review the regulatory frameworks governing records management and recast them into a comprehensive and unequivocal set of principles, practice-oriented procedures and rules to keep pace with changes in the record-keeping environment and technology, and cover the whole life cycle of recorded information. He or she should ensure strict compliance with those principles, procedures and rules for any materials identified as records of the organization;<sup>5</sup>

(b) Ensure the application of records management policies throughout the Commission through resource allocation at a lower level and promotion of compliance with records management procedures;<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> World Bank and International Records Management Trust, *Managing Records as the Basis for Effective Service Delivery and Public Accountability in Development: An Introduction to Core Principles for Staff of the World Bank and Its Partners* (Washington, July 2000). Available at <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTARCHIVES/Resources/Core%20Principles.pdf>. Also Aliza Ismail and Adnan Jamaludin, “Towards establishing a framework for managing trusted records in the electronic environment”, *Records Management Journal*, vol. 19, No. 2 (June 2009), pp.135–146.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations, Joint Inspection Unit. Records management in the United Nations (JIU/REP/2013/2). Recommendation 1, p. 16.

<sup>6</sup> International Organization for Standardization. Information and documentation – Records management – Part 1: General. ISO 15489-1 (first edition, 2001), pp. 2 and 5-6.

(c) Be accountable for ensuring that all sections, divisions, subregional offices, the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP) and other entities under his or her responsibility have developed and apply the basic components of records management programmes to all records for which they have managerial responsibility.<sup>7</sup>

## **Management responsibilities**

### **Director responsible for records management function**

14. The overall responsibility for records management rests with the Director responsible for records management function. The Director has ultimate responsibility to:

- (a) Ensure that the Commission complies with the legislation and standards specified in section 5.1 of the ECA records management policy;
- (b) Endorse the framework for the records management programme of the Commission, that is, file plans, manual of procedures, guidelines, standards and retention and disposal schedules;
- (c) Recruit records and information management personnel;
- (d) Approve resources for technology, staff training and development in all record-keeping competencies; provide the space, supplies and services necessary to maintain the records and archives management programme in secure and compliant conditions;
- (e) Monitor and evaluate the records management programme.

### **Directors/managers of divisions, sections, subregional offices and the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning**

15. Directors and managers of business units or organizational groupings are responsible for:

- (a) Ensuring that their staff create and keep records as an integral part of their work and in accordance with established policies, procedures and standards;<sup>8</sup>
- (b) Designating records management coordinators (focal persons) to be responsible for the overall administration of the records of their respective business areas, and incorporating records management coordination duties in their annual performance appraisals;
- (c) Ensuring that all staff members in their business areas comply with official policy relating to the creation, maintenance and use of official records, and working together with the records management coordinators to implement the ECA records management policy;
- (d) Facilitating the implementation of the ECA records management policy by authorizing various aspects of records management activity in their business area, such as requests to transfer of records for storage or to access classified records, and endorsing records disposition plans.

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<sup>7</sup> United Nations, Joint Inspection Unit. Records management in the United Nations (JIU/REP/2013/2). Recommendation 2, p. 23.

<sup>8</sup> International Organization for Standardization. Information and documentation – Records Management – Part 2: Guidelines (Technical report). ISO/TR 15489-2 (first edition, 2001), section 2.3.2.

## **Section or unit responsible for records management function**

16. The section or unit responsible for records management function has the primary responsibility for developing and implementing the Commission-wide records management programme.<sup>9</sup> This includes:

- (a) Developing records management regulatory framework to be applied to all records regardless of media or location;
- (b) Establishing suitable conditions for the maintenance of records;
- (c) Implementing the Secretary-General's bulletin on information sensitivity, classification and handling (ST/SGB/2007/6) in order to identify, classify, handle and manage sensitive records so as to prevent unauthorized access and disclosure;
- (d) Developing and reviewing records retention and disposal schedules for the Commission's records;
- (e) Providing training and awareness to the staff regarding the records management programme;
- (f) Coordinating and implementing the file classification scheme for records across all sections, divisions, subregional offices and the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning;
- (g) Managing the implementation of the retention schedule for business records across all ECA business units;
- (h) Coordinating and spearheading the programme activities, and evaluating the effectiveness and performance of the programme and information systems through periodic surveys to ensure compliance with the ECA records management policy;
- (i) Designing and implementing strategies and systems to manage electronic records;
- (j) Coordinating the transfer of records from section, division, the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning and subregional office registries to the storage facility (the Records Centre and the Archival Facility) for further processing and assist staff with retrieval services for those records;
- (k) Conducting clearance, in collaboration with Human Resources Services Section, to ensure that all records are handed over when a staff member separates from the Commission;
- (l) Participating in the Commission's disaster recovery and business continuity planning by developing strategies and procedures guiding the identification and management of vital records, and providing means for recovery of records in the event of disaster.

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<sup>9</sup> International Organization for Standardization. Information and documentation – Records management – Part 1: General. ISO 15489-1 (first edition, 2001), section 4.

## **Records management coordinators (focal persons)**

17. Records management coordinators (focal persons) have particular responsibilities for managing records and physical files in their offices. They are the point of contact for their offices with regards to records management issues. They work with staff of the section/unit responsible for records management function to:

- (a) Carry out the physical inventory of all office records, maintaining the filing system and applying record-keeping standards and procedures as outlined in this Manual of Procedures;
- (b) Ensure that office-of-record documents are properly maintained, applying and updating the file plans adopted by their respective offices;
- (c) Support and train staff members in their sections on the agreed records management practices;
- (d) Request the transfer of semi-active records to the Records Centre and provide file lists for future retrieval;
- (e) Ensure that staff, consultants and interns hand over all official paper and electronic records before they separate from the Commission;
- (f) Facilitate the records disposition process, including the coordination of disposal authorization from appropriate staff.

## **All staff**

18. All staff must understand their responsibility regarding the management and protection of the Commission's information and records, and must comply with records management programme policies and procedures. They must:

- (a) Create, receive and keep records as part of their daily work, and should do so in accordance with established policies, procedure and standards. In this context, records should be disposed of only in accordance with authorized disposition instruments;<sup>10</sup>
- (b) Maintain records in an organized manner so that they can be found when needed;
- (c) Not alter, destroy, misplace or render useless any official document, record or file intended to be kept as a record of the Commission;<sup>11</sup>
- (d) Not remove any records from the ECA premises when separating from the Commission; records are to be retained within the staff member's work unit for future business use, unless disposal is authorized in an approved retention schedule.<sup>12</sup> A staff member is entitled to have a reasonable

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<sup>10</sup> International Organization for Standardization. Information and documentation – Records Management – Part 2: Guidelines (Technical report). ISO/TR 15489-2 (first edition, 2001), p. 2, and ST/SGB/2007/5, section 3.3.

<sup>11</sup> ST/SGB/2007/5, section 3.2.

<sup>12</sup> ST/SGB/2007/5, section 3.3.

number of unrestricted documents copied at his or her expense and to retain his or her privacy;

(e) Be accountable to their supervisors for compliance with the ECA records management policy and related policies, standards and guidelines;

(f) Understand that all records, including electronic records and e-mail records, created or received by a staff member in connection with or as a result of the official work of the United Nations are the property of the United Nations.<sup>13</sup>

## **Record offices (registries)**

19. The essential function of a records office (registry) is to:

(a) Receive and distribute incoming and internally created mail of all kinds (such as letters, memoranda and faxes);

(b) Ensure that incoming correspondence is filed correctly alongside other relevant records, giving the action officers the full picture when dealing with the matter at hand;

(c) Provide greater control over file creation, thereby reducing duplication of files; ensure that files are created within the correct part of the classification plan, and provide improved access to files and records;

(d) Know the location of all officially registered files and produce them quickly through the use of effective indexing, classification and tracking procedures; provide an audit trail of who has had access, and conduct checks on loans, in order to reduce the number of lost files;

(e) Provide storage, repository and reference services for all officially registered files and other documentation;

(f) Record and arrange for the efficient and timely dispatch of all correspondence produced by the staff;

(g) Review and transfer to the Records Centre all outdated files or other records in accordance with retention schedules.

## **III. ECA records management: overview**

### **A. Introduction**

20. Records and information are important assets of ECA. They document decisions and evidence of business transactions and contribute to high-quality research, improve relations with member States and ensure accountability and transparency of substantive and normative activities. Without access to records, the Commission would be unable to function. Effective record-keeping meets the dual challenge of maintaining and accessing records that are necessary for operations, and disposing of records and duplicates that are no longer needed.

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<sup>13</sup> ST/SGB/2007/5, section 3.1.

21. The Commission's current records, either printed, electronic, audiovisual or posted on the Web, produced by staff performing their functions, form a key asset of the Commission and a major element of knowledge management that ensures handedness of historical and institutional memory. Proper management of these records also leads to better handover in successions, and save time and money through avoidance of repetition of similar and duplicating attempts or mistakes in activities of any office of the Commission. All ECA staff, therefore, have a role to play in record-keeping.

## **B. Records management concepts**

### **1. What is records management?**

22. According to the ISO standard on information and documentation (records management), records management is the “field of management responsible for the efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use and disposition of records, including processes for capturing and maintaining evidence of and information about business activities and transactions in the form of records”.<sup>14</sup>

### **2. What is a record-keeping system?**

23. A record-keeping system is a set of tools, policies and procedures which together create, capture, organize and classify records to facilitate their secure management, preservation, retrieval, use and disposition. Importantly, it is the “logical” system for managing records and is independent of the formats in which records are created. Implementing a record-keeping system in a modern way requires records managers, archivists, communication and information technology systems professionals, managers and the staff who create records (i.e. everyone!) to work together for a common goal – good information governance.

24. All record-keeping systems should:

- (a) Routinely capture all records generated from the business activities;
- (b) Organize the records in a way that reflects the business processes of the records creator;
- (c) Protect the records from unauthorized alteration, destruction or transfer;
- (d) Routinely function as the primary source of information about actions that are documented in the records;
- (e) Provide an audit trail of who has viewed or altered a record and when;
- (f) Provide ready access to all relevant records and related metadata;
- (g) Have documented policies, assigned responsibilities and formal methodologies for the management of the record-keeping system.

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<sup>14</sup> International Organization for Standardization. Information and documentation – Records management – Part 1: General. ISO 15489-1 (first edition, 2001), section 3.16.

25. The ECA record-keeping system has three main elements:

- (a) Systems and procedures for creating and capturing records;
- (b) Systems for classifying and filing procedures;
- (c) Retention schedules and retention action procedures.

### **3. What is a record?**

26. The definition of a record is provided by the International Standard on Records Management (ISO 15489) as:

“Information created, received and maintained as evidence and information by an organization or person, in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business”.

27. ISO 30300 has broadened the scope of record as information “assets” and into more structured digital territory by stating under 5.1 that:

“Records are both evidence of business activity and information assets. Any set of information, regardless of its structure or form, can be managed as a record. This includes information in the form of a document, a collection of data or other types of digital or analogue information which is used, received or produced in the course of business activity”.<sup>15</sup>

28. The Secretary-General’s bulletin (ST/SGB/2007/5, section 1(j)) defines a record (or official record) as:

“any data or information, regardless of form or medium, maintained by the United Nations as evidence of a transaction”.

29. In the ECA context, records are understood as information regardless of media produced or received to support and facilitate ECA business transactions and kept as evidence of those transactions. In order to adequately support the businesses they relate to, records must be made, be accurate, be authentic, have integrity, be usable and be managed as valuable assets of the Commission.

30. A record is more than its informational content. It must contain the following:

- (a) **Content** – the information contained in the structure of the record conveying the evidence of the transaction;
- (b) **Context** – refers to who created it, when, how and why. It is the information documenting the source in terms of the transaction to which it relates, such as creator, date, security and access, language, disposal and format of the record, and which is normally separated in the structure from the content;

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<sup>15</sup> See <http://www.unicef.org/2013/12/jiurep20132-records-archives-management-in-un-unicef-etc-by-inspection-unit/>.

(c) **Structure** – the format of the record and any links to attachments or other related documents. The structure may also be understood in terms of the relationship between the component parts of the record. For example, in an email the information is structured in an accepted order – under *From, To, Subject, signature details, email disclaimer* – that permits understanding of the message and the relationships between the different elements.

#### **4. Characteristics of a record**

31. Records contain distinctive features, which make them unique in relation to other forms or sorts of information. Such features are:

(a) **Authenticity** (it is what it says it is), which means “worthy of acceptance or belief as conforming to or based on fact” – showing evidence of actions and transactions;

(b) **Reliability** (it is authoritative and trustworthy). Records should support accountability, which is tightly connected to evidence but allows accountability to be traced;

(c) **Integrity** (whether it is complete and unaltered). Records are related to processes, i.e. “information that is generated by and linked to work processes”;

(d) **Usability** (the ability to locate, retrieve, and present the record). Records must be preserved, some for a very short time and some permanently.<sup>16</sup>

#### **5. Records, information and non-records**

32. Organizations collect, make, use and manage a wide variety of recorded information, which can be categorized as *records, published information, and non-record non-published information*.

##### **(a) Records**

33. As described above, records are evidence of business activities and have meaning primarily in the context of those activities.

##### **(b) Published information**

34. Published information may provide important information to support business activities but, unlike records, it is not evidence of such activities. Published information may take the form of books, journals, newspapers, technical literature, DVDs, CDs, videos, etc.

##### **(C) Non-records, non-published information**

35. These cover a wide range of unpublished information used to support business activity. Examples include market research data, contact information for clients, purchased news or other information, reports or other information assembled for reporting or other activities. This type of

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<sup>16</sup> Keyes, J., *Bring Your Own Devices (BYOD) Survival Guide* (London, CRC Press, 2013); International Organization for Standardization. Information and documentation – Records management – Part 1: General. ISO 15489-1 (first edition, 2001), section 7.2.

information does not usually provide evidence of the business activity and is not a record. If it plays an important role in particular business activities, it may need to be incorporated into the records of those transactions. For example, purchased research information that influences a policy decision; the address of the recipient of a letter or email, etc.

## **6. Why is records management important?**

36. The core business of ECA involves the processing of large amounts of information. Given the wide range and number of records ECA creates and uses, it is essential that they should be captured, managed and preserved in an organized system which maintains their integrity and authenticity.

37. Records contain information that is a valuable resource and an important business asset. Systematic management of records enables ECA to:

- (a) Comply with United Nations records and archives management requirements as well as recommendations by several internal and external auditors that called for action to improve records management situation in the Commission;
- (b) Facilitate the organization of information and records for easy retrieval when needed;
- (c) Protect records that are essential to the Commission's critical business operations;
- (d) Reduce labour requirements for the creation, organization, retrieval and dissemination of recorded information;
- (e) Minimize storage requirements (space, equipment and supplies) for a given quantity of records;
- (f) Reduce the time and effort required to reconstruct vital information in the event of disaster, theft or other losses;
- (g) Be prepared for United Nations office automation projects which make it mandatory to bring order to paper-based filing systems so that a life-cycle approach to the management of information can be implemented.

## **C. Documents and records management**

38. "Document" and "record" are terms that are frequently used interchangeably. An understanding of these terms is essential to facilitate the capture of records that are judicial evidence of organizations.

39. The term "document" generally refers to items that have yet to be finalized. They contain content somewhere in the middle of a workflow process, and may be added to or amended in the near future. Documents are made up of content, which aids in the completion of work; examples include organization policies, emails and unsigned contracts.

40. Records are items that have been completed and need to be stored for compliance or reference. Records will not – and in many cases, cannot – be altered by users. Whereas an unsigned contract is an example of a document, a signed contract is a perfect example of a record. This piece of paper will not be added to or amended in the foreseeable future, but it must be kept on file or in a record-keeping

system.

41. Documents management attaches immense importance to fast search and retrieval, sharing and revision capabilities and improving daily processes, making them more efficient.

42. Records management focuses on the preservation of the file, protecting it from changes or damage, establishing retention periods and managing chain of custody. Records management organizes and archives the proof of that work in its final form. The central emphasis for records management is on legal compliance.

43. Records are often paired with strict compliance regulations regarding their access, storage and destruction.

44. For reasons of legal compliance, records management is centred around two core components: storing items in formats that cannot be edited, and designating an intended date for destruction. These two functions would be incredibly problematic in a document management schema.

45. Documents need to be managed like any other asset because they contain information still swimming through workflows. Failure to properly manage them could create troublesome bottlenecks, document duplication or at worst, Commission-wide service interruption.

## **IV. Management of the records life cycle**

### **A. Introduction**

46. ECA has adopted a hybrid approach in the management of its records. Hybrid records management is the management of records systems containing paper and electronic records. In particular, an electronic records management system is configured to manage both paper and electronic records.

47. The hybrid approach enables the storage of electronic and physical records partly in an electronic file within the electronic records management system and partly in a related paper file outside the system.<sup>17</sup> Physical files are registered in the system under the same file classification scheme as the electronic records, in this way providing for the management of hybrid files of electronic and physical records.

48. Furthermore, ECA records management follows “Records life cycle and continuum models”, in which records are created, used for so long as they have continuing value and then disposed of by destruction or by transfer to an archival facility.

### **1. Records life cycle model**

49. The records life cycle model reflects the opinion that all records, irrespective of form and

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<sup>17</sup> Stephen Howard, “Hybrid records management – A local government perspective”, *Records Management Bulletin*, vol. 110 (2002), pp.3–8. Available from [http://www.archivalstrategies.com/Documents/200210\\_RMSBulletin110\\_Hybrid\\_Records\\_Management.pdf](http://www.archivalstrategies.com/Documents/200210_RMSBulletin110_Hybrid_Records_Management.pdf).

purpose, pass through certain well-defined phases.<sup>18</sup> It draws an analogy between the concept of the biological life of an organism, which is born, lives and dies, and that of a record, which is created, is used for so long as it has continuing value and is then disposed of by destruction or by transfer to an archival institution.<sup>19</sup>

50. The life cycle model fits well with management of paper records, which, if not controlled in the earlier phases of their life cycle, may lead to vast quantities of inactive records clogging office space, making retrieval of important administrative, financial, legal and other information virtually impossible as a result.

## 2. Records continuum model

51. The continuum model advocates consistent and coherent management of electronic records from the time of creation through to the preservation of records and their use as archives.<sup>20</sup> The model addresses the challenges of electronic record-keeping specifically in terms of the issues of authenticity and reliability.

52. The model centres on the global interest in "recordness" and archival theories on provenance, which raises the basic questions of evidence of about who did what.<sup>21</sup>

53. The model addresses the role of record-keeping in support of corporate accountability with questions such as:

- (a) What constitutes accountable record-keeping?
- (b) What types of organizational risks are associated with failures in record-keeping?
- (c) How can the record-keeping profession demonstrate the causal links between poor or negligent record-keeping and failures of accountability?
- (d) How can the record-keeping profession address the need for evidence-based decision-making in all spheres of life?
- (e) How can the role of archives in accountable societies be safeguarded?

54. In keeping with the above models, ECA records pass through three main phases.

- (a) **Current phase (active):** in which records are used regularly in the conduct of current

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<sup>18</sup> Carlota Bustelo and Judith Ellis, What is ISO 30300? Who, when, where, why and how to implement. International Organization for Standardization. PowerPoint presentation. Available from [http://www.iso30300.es/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Innovadoc2011\\_JEllisCBustelo.pdf](http://www.iso30300.es/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Innovadoc2011_JEllisCBustelo.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> J. McLeod, "The record's life cycle – myth, mantra or misnomer?" *Records Management Journal*, vol. 6, No. 19 (April 1996).

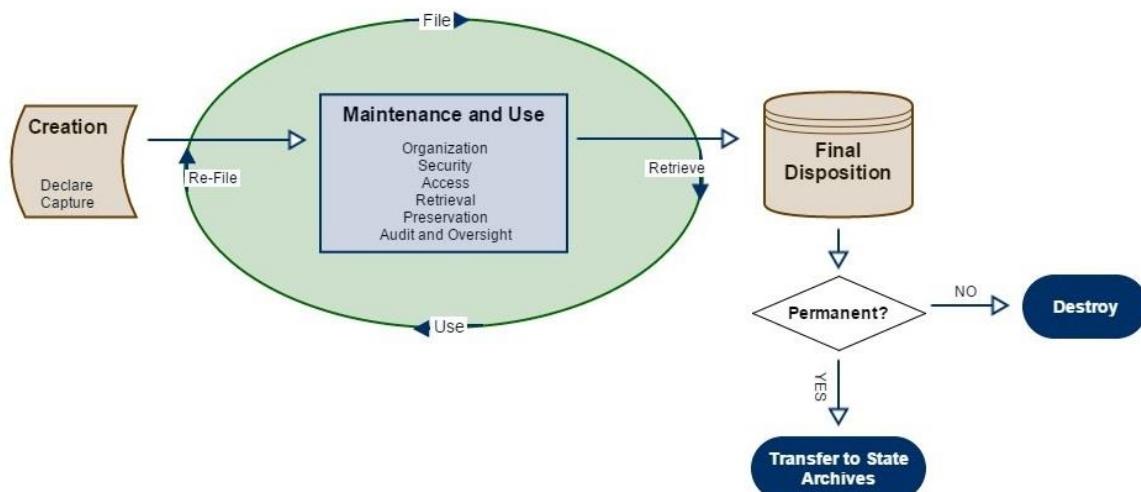
<sup>20</sup> Etiwel Mutero, "The Records Life-Circle and Continuum Concepts". 14 July 2011. Available from <https://recordsandarchives.wordpress.com/2011/07/14/the-records-life-circle-and-continuum-concepts/>. Accessed 11 December 2017.

<sup>21</sup> Frank Upward, "Modelling the continuum as paradigm shift in recordkeeping and archiving processes, and beyond: A personal reflection", *Records Management Journal*, vol. 10, No. 3 (2000), p. 123.

business and maintained in their place of origin or in the file store of an associated records office or registry;

(b) **Semi-current phase (semi-active)**: in which records are used infrequently in the conduct of current business and are maintained in a records centre;

(c) **Non-current phase (inactive)**: in which records are appraised and destroyed unless they have continuing value, which merits their preservation as archives in an archival facility of the Commission.



Source: Utah Division of Archives and Records Service, “Scheduling the lifecycle of your records”. Records Management Essentials, section 2.4. Available at <https://archives.utah.gov/recordsmanagement/CSS/rm-certification/rm-2-4.html>.

## B. Records creation and capture

### 1. Records creation

55. The creation and management of records are integral to any organization's activities, processes and systems. They enable business efficiency, accountability, risk management and business continuity. They also enable organizations to capitalize on the value of their information resources as business, commercial and knowledge assets, and to contribute to the preservation of collective memory, responding to the challenges of the global and digital environment.<sup>22</sup>

- Records must meet legislative, regulatory and administrative requirements
- Records must be captured regardless of format
- Records must be classified, and metadata applied
- Records must be captured into systems with record-keeping functionality.
- Records must be appraised for their value

<sup>22</sup> Carlota Bustelo and Judith Ellis, What is ISO 30300? Who, when, where, why and how to implement. International Organization for Standardization. PowerPoint presentation. Available from [http://www.iso30300.es/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Innovadoc2011\\_JEllisCBustelo.pdf](http://www.iso30300.es/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Innovadoc2011_JEllisCBustelo.pdf).

56. The scope of ECA records management begins before records are created, with an understanding of the need to create records in order to satisfy legislative and business requirements. Documentation of these requirements within a business classification scheme or thesaurus, which is then incorporated into a record-keeping system, is a key component of an adequate records management programme.

57. The main purpose of records creation and capture is to provide evidence of the functioning of an organization or for the accountability of a corporate body or an individual.<sup>23</sup>

58. Capture and control of records allows the Commission to protect its legal interests and deliver its mandated services.

59. Review and updating of creation, capture and control requirements is essential in times of administrative or legislative change, to ensure that the Commission maintains compliance.

60. Records must be created and captured irrespective of the technology format or medium. This includes hard-copy formats and electronic records in email systems, websites, social media, business systems and cloud-based applications.<sup>24</sup>

61. Official records are created as a direct consequence of the conduct of the business of the Commission. The records:

- (a) Provide proof that certain actions or events occurred;
- (b) Meet specific legislative requirements concerning the creation of records;
- (c) Enable the Commission to see what has happened in the past and act as an information source to guide future actions.

62. Official records should be created as business is transacted or as soon as possible thereafter. As part of records management planning activities, the Commission has conducted a business process analysis that identifies and documents the points at which records are and should be created. (*Please refer to the scope notes of the file classification scheme for the activities of your office*).

## **Principles of records creation**

63. Records must be made: Business units of the Commission must ensure that records that document or facilitate the transaction of a business activity are made.

64. Records creation and capture should follow standards that ensure records are complete,

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<sup>23</sup> International Council on Archives, 1997. A guide for Managing Electronic Records From an Archival Perspective Committee on Electronic Records February 1997, Available at: [http://www.wien2004.ica.org/en/node/30019%5Cnht\\_tp://www.archives.go.jp/law/pdf/ICASTUDY8\\_ELECTRONIC\\_RECORDS\\_JPN.pdf](http://www.wien2004.ica.org/en/node/30019%5Cnht_tp://www.archives.go.jp/law/pdf/ICASTUDY8_ELECTRONIC_RECORDS_JPN.pdf).

<sup>24</sup> Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office, *Records Management Principles: Overview*. State Records Guideline No. 1. 2014. Page 5. Available from <https://www.informationstrategy.tas.gov.au/Records-Management-Principles/Document%20Library%20%20Tools/Guideline%20001%20Records%20Management%20Principles%20Overview.pdf>.

accurate and reliable over time. The business units should follow the set of business rules identifying what records should be kept, by whom this should be done, at what point in the process or transaction this should be done, what those records should contain, and where and how they should be stored.

65. Each business unit of the Commission should ensure it keeps the records needed for business, regulatory, legal and accountability purposes. Business units must decide what records should be kept and consider the risks of not having those records in view of the legislative and regulatory environment within which the Commission operates, that is:

(a) The need to refer to authoritative information about past actions and decisions for current business purposes;

(b) The need to protect the legal and other rights of the Commission, its staff and stakeholders;

(c) The need to explain, and if necessary justify, past actions in the event of an audit, public inquiry or other investigation.

66. Business units should also consider whether records should be subject to particular controls so that their evidential value (authenticity, reliability, integrity and usability) can be demonstrated when required.

67. Staff must be aware of the records they should keep and adhere to business rules on keeping accurate and complete records as part of their daily work.

68. Business units should ensure that staff creating or filing records are also aware of the need to give those records titles that reflect their specific nature and contents so as to facilitate retrieval.

69. Staff should also be aware of the need to dispose of ephemeral material on a routine basis.

## **2. Records capture**

70. The purpose of capturing records into a record-keeping system is threefold:

- (a) To establish a relationship between the record, its creator and the business context;
- (b) To place the record and its relationship within a record-keeping system;
- (c) To link the record to other records.<sup>25</sup>

### **(a) Principles of records capture**

71. Records must be captured into the corporate records management system of the Commission.

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<sup>25</sup> State Records of South Australia, *Adequate Records Management – Creation, Capture and Control*. Adelaide, 2013. Page 2. Available from [https://government.archives.sa.gov.au/sites/default/files/20131106%20Adequate%20Records%20Management%20-%20Creation,%20Capture%20&%20Control%20Final%20V1\\_Copy.pdf](https://government.archives.sa.gov.au/sites/default/files/20131106%20Adequate%20Records%20Management%20-%20Creation,%20Capture%20&%20Control%20Final%20V1_Copy.pdf).

72. The ECA corporate records management system is the primary repository of the corporate records of the Commission. The capture of records into the corporate records management system facilitates efficiency, accountability, compliance and risk mitigation. It means that:

- (a) Records not managed within the ECA corporate records management system cannot be a true representation of what they purport to be, that is, genuine records of business transactions, decisions made or advice given in the normal conduct of business.<sup>26</sup>
- (b) Information not captured into the ECA corporate records keeping system cannot be seen as the best evidence of the business if it is required in a court case or by formal inquiry or judiciary hearing, and may be difficult to defend if challenged.<sup>27</sup>
- (c) Records must be captured using metadata standards embedded in, attached to or associated with the specific record regardless of format, arranged in a logical structure or sequence, which facilitates subsequent use and reference and provides evidence of the existence of records in a records system.<sup>28</sup> Record-keeping metadata are used to identify, authenticate and contextualize records.<sup>29</sup>
- (d) Records capture must follow the Commission's File Classification Scheme to reflect business activities and provide linkages between individual documents. Classification assists in records retrieval, security and access and in determining retention periods and disposition actions for records. (*For more details, please refer to the ECA file classification scheme*).

## **(b) Practices for record creation and capture**

### **(i) How are records created?**

73. There are different ways records can be created, including:

- (a) Handwriting notes;
- (b) Completing forms or templates;
- (c) Creating and transmitting an email;

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<sup>26</sup> Australia. Government of the Northern Territory, *Records Management Standards for Public Sector Organizations in the Northern Territory*. 2010. Page 8. Available from [http://www.nt.gov.au/dcis/docs/records\\_policy\\_standards/re\\_cords\\_management\\_standards.pdf](http://www.nt.gov.au/dcis/docs/records_policy_standards/re_cords_management_standards.pdf).

<sup>27</sup> There are few rules governing the authenticity, integrity and use of information managed in an unstructured environment (how was created, by whom, which version it is, who has access to it, its security classification etc.), and formal scrutiny is difficult.

<sup>28</sup> United Kingdom, National Archives. Records Management Capacity Assessment System – User Guide. 2005. Page 7. Available from [http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/rmcas/documentation/rmcas\\_user\\_guide.pdf](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/rmcas/documentation/rmcas_user_guide.pdf). Also Ozgür Külcü and Hande Uzun Külcü, “The Records Management Capacity Assessment System (RMCAS) as a tool for programme development at the Turkish Red Crescent Society”, *International Journal of Information Management*, vol. 29 (2009), pp.483–487.

<sup>29</sup> D.A. Wallace, 2001. “Archiving Metadata Forum: Report from the Recordkeeping Metadata Working Meeting, June 2000”. *Archival Science*, vol. 1 (2001). Available from [https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/418\\_15/10502\\_2004\\_Article\\_382966.pdf?sequence=1](https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/418_15/10502_2004_Article_382966.pdf?sequence=1).

- (d) Creating a memorandum or note for file;
- (e) Creating word-processed documents;
- (f) Taking photographs (taken either digitally or traditionally);
- (g) Making video tapes, DVD and traditional film recordings;
- (h) Making audio tapes, CD and other audio recordings from video conferences, Skype, etc.;
- (i) Entering data into a database.<sup>30</sup>

**(ii) How are records captured?**

74. There are also different ways to capture records, that is, to incorporate them within the Commission's records system, which include:

- (a) Registration, which provides evidence of the records' existence;
- (b) Classification and indexing, which allow appropriate linking, grouping, naming, security, user permissions and retrieval, disposition and identifying vital records;
- (c) Arrangement in a logical structure and sequence, whether a physical file or an electronic directory, which facilitates subsequent use and reference;
- (d) Physically placing paper records in correct files as part of the file classification scheme for paper records;
- (e) Saving records into the appropriate file folders within the record-keeping system;
- (f) Automated creation and capture into a business system is evident in a system that keeps a copy of a sent message.<sup>31</sup>

**(iii) When should records be created?**

75. Records should be created when there is a need for evidence and information – the need to remember the details of an event, decision or action taken so that anyone needing recourse to the facts, whether or not they were part of the original matter, can rely on knowledge which is accurate.

76. When carrying out an action or making a decision it is important to create an accurate record. Some records which affect ECA are created by others (e.g. contractors or stakeholders), and must also be captured to provide a complete and reliable picture of the business of ECA.

77. However, some things that appear to be records may not need to be captured because:

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<sup>30</sup> United Nations, Archives and Records Management Section. Recordkeeping toolkit for peacekeeping and political operations (version 3, January 2010), section 5 – Records creation and capture. Page 3. Available from [https://archives.un.org/sites/archives.un.org/files/files/DPKO%20Toolkit/Records\\_creation\\_and\\_capture.pdf](https://archives.un.org/sites/archives.un.org/files/files/DPKO%20Toolkit/Records_creation_and_capture.pdf).

<sup>31</sup> State Records of South Australia, *Adequate Records Management*, pp. 2-3.

- (a) There is no need for evidence that something has been done;
- (b) They are duplicates of evidence or information located in one or more other records (e.g. copies of records created and captured in other parts of ECA and sent to you for information);
- (c) They are not records of an ECA activity or decision.

78. While many requirements to create and keep records arise from the Commission's business processes, some rules as to the content, style and structure are in place, for example font type and size, size of paper, etc., which are enforced by means of staff training or monitoring procedures. Staff must adhere to these requirements when creating or capturing records.

#### **(iv) What to file?**

79. The importance of a piece of information is not always clear when it is first created. If you answer **YES** to any of the questions below, then the information is to be considered as a record and captured into a record-keeping system:

- (a) Is there a statutory requirement to make or keep particular records?
- (b) Are there any financial or legal implications that may come under scrutiny to ensure accountability?
- (c) Is this information required for reporting purposes to internal or external bodies?
- (d) Is this evidence of a decision which sets a precedent?
- (e) Is this evidence of a decision which will affect another individual or office or ECA as a whole?
- (f) Is this evidence of a decision which needs or may need supporting evidence?
- (g) Is this evidence of a decision which needs or may need a record of the decision and/or the decision-making process?
- (h) Is this evidence of a change to policy, procedure or methodology?
- (i) Is this evidence of a business transaction or agreement?
- (j) Does the transaction have to be approved by a senior officer, committee or specialist section?
- (k) Does this information authorize or approve an action?
- (l) Is this formal advice or an instruction I gave or received?
- (m) Is this information likely to be of value or importance to others outside my immediate working environment?
- (n) Is the information likely to be of historical or cultural value to future generations?

(o) If I left my job tomorrow, would my successor need this information?

**(c) What not to file?**

80. Not all documents and emails need to be captured and filed into the ECA corporate record-keeping system. Do not file:

(a) Books, reference materials, advertisements, newspapers, etc.;

(b) Documents normally kept in the ECA Library, such as official World Bank documents, etc.;

(c) Multiple copies of the same documents;

(d) Transitory records which are required for a limited time to ensure the completion of a routine action, such as a printout of the room reservation for a meeting.

**(d) Some business activities that should be documented**

***Meetings***

81. Meetings may be formal or informal. In either case, significant decisions made in meetings need to be documented, normally in the form of minutes that are circulated for comments and signed or otherwise confirmed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

82. If records are not made of meetings, the Commission and individual staff are at risk of not being able to account for decisions taken or actions committed to, and important information about the business conducted will not be available or accessible across the Commission.

***Telephone conversations, video conferences, SMS messages or face-to-face encounters***

83. It is important to create records of conversations held using the telephone, video conferencing, SMS messages or face-to-face if significant business decisions were made that are likely to have a significant impact on the Commission's resources or its staff and if there is no documentary evidence to follow such as a letter or memo. Examples include conversations that:

(a) Convey the primary response from the Commission to another organization, a staff member, a media representative or a client (i.e. instances in which a response will not be confirmed in writing), such as a verbal agreement, authorization, directive or formal/legal advice;

(b) Represent complaints from a staff member, member States etc. requiring further investigation.

84. A written record of these conversations must be created in the form of a file note or follow-up email and circulated to the other participants to ensure they agree that it is an accurate reflection of the conversation.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> University of Tasmania, *UTAS Records Management Guidelines*, May 2014, p.7. Available from [http://www.utas.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/29481/Records-Management-Guidelines.pdf](http://www.utas.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/29481/Records-Management-Guidelines.pdf).

## **C. Records maintenance and use**

85. Records maintenance include aspects of tracking, access, retrieval, handling and storage of records during the course of business in an office.

### **1. Principles of records maintenance and use**

#### **(a) Discovery**

86. Records must be promptly findable and accessible whenever they are required.

(a) Staff should access the required records in a timely and efficient manner. This will avoid complaints of delays because of a poor records management system that makes it difficult or impossible to locate the information which is sought;

(b) Electronic records must be searched for, retrieved and rendered in accessible formats and media as long as they are required for business or legal purposes. For electronic records, which need to be retained for a long period, records must be kept in a form in which they are capable of being read and reproduced.

#### **(b) Security**

87. The ECA information security policy provides guidelines on issues of access. For example, ease of internal access will depend on the nature and sensitivity of the records, and thus:

(a) Records access guidelines cover who has access to which records, and in what circumstances. The access environment includes privacy, security and archival legislation. Access may relate to the monitoring of user permissions and job responsibilities.<sup>33</sup>

(b) Access restrictions should be applied when necessary to protect the information concerned and should be kept up to date.

(c) Care should be taken with personal information in order to comply with the data protection principle, which requires precautions against unauthorized or unlawful processing, damage, loss or destruction of personal information\*\*.<sup>34</sup>

(d) External access should be provided in accordance with relevant legislation. An audit trail should be kept of provision of access, especially to people outside the immediate work area. (*For more details, please refer to the ECA information security policy*).

(e) A strategy for tracking of movements and use of records is required to identify outstanding action, enable records location and retrieval, prevent loss of records, monitor records

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<sup>33</sup> Andrew Griffin, “Records Management Capacity Assessment System (RMCAS)”, *Archival Science*, vol. 4 (2004), pp.71–97.

<sup>34</sup> Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data, 2010. *Data protection principles in the personal data (privacy) ordinance – from the commissioner’s perspective*, Available at: [https://www.pcpd.org.hk/english/resources\\_centre/publications/books/files/Perspective\\_2nd.pdf](https://www.pcpd.org.hk/english/resources_centre/publications/books/files/Perspective_2nd.pdf).

use, maintain an auditable trail of records transactions and identify the operational origins of individual records where systems may have been amalgamated or migrated.<sup>35</sup>

### (c) Storage

88. The decision to capture a record implies an intention to store it. Appropriate storage conditions ensure that records are protected, accessible and managed in a cost-effective manner.<sup>36</sup>

89. The purpose of records storage and preservation is to ensure their reliability, authenticity and usability for as long as they are needed in proper storage conditions which protect against unauthorized access, loss or destruction, theft and disaster.<sup>37</sup> It requires:

(a) Updating of the storage media and migration of the software format within which the information and metadata are held, and regular monitoring of integrity and usability;

(b) Assessment of risks facing records in digital systems such as accidental or unauthorized alteration, copying, movement or deletion, which can happen without trace, and introduction of appropriate safeguards;

(c) Regular monitoring of physical records. For example, formats such as early photocopies may be at risk of fading, and regular checks should be made of any information in such formats that is of continuing value to the Commission;

(d) Storage should follow accepted standards in respect of the storage environment, fire precautions, health and safety and, if applicable, physical organization. It should allow easy and efficient retrieval of information but also minimize the risk of damage, loss or unauthorized access;

(e) Records that are no longer required for frequent reference can be removed from current systems to offline or near-offline storage (for digital media) or storage in the Records Centre (for paper) where this is a more economical and efficient way to store them. They should continue to be subject to normal records management controls and procedures;

(f) The whereabouts of records should be known always, and the movement of files and other physical records between storage areas and office areas should be logged.

90. Storage equipment used in the registries must provide appropriate protection for records based on the format and volume of the records, how frequently they are used, how quickly they need to be accessed, and security requirements.

91. File drawers or cupboards should be clearly labelled with details of the file series and the portion of files in the drawers.

92. Storage of files in the registries should follow safety best practice. In particular:

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<sup>35</sup> United Kingdom, Records Management Capacity Assessment System, p. 7.

<sup>36</sup> International Organization for Standardization. Information and documentation – Records Management – Part 2: Guidelines (Technical report). ISO/TR 15489-2 (first edition, 2001), section 4.3.7.1.

<sup>37</sup> United Kingdom, Records Management Capacity Assessment System.

- (a) There should be enough space around the filing cabinets to allow comfortable opening of drawers or doors to retrieve files;
- (b) Box and lever arch files should be stored standing on shelves, not stacked on floors;
- (c) Boxes and files should never overhang shelves;
- (d) Records should not be stored on the top of shelving units, as they will be too close to lighting, as well as making storage units unstable;
- (e) There must also be a clear cabinet top or table in a non-public, secure space nearby to place files for return, new records for filing, files for charging out, etc.;
- (f) Storage boxes, where used, should not be stacked more than four high, should not be stored in corridors, and should not block or restrict access to registry doors, lifts, stairways or office areas.

#### **(d) Backup**

93. Backup copies of records in digital systems should be kept and stored securely in a separate location.

- (a) Backups should be checked regularly to ensure that the storage medium has not degraded and the information remains intact and capable of being restored to operational use;
- (b) Backups should be managed in a way that enables disposal decisions to be applied securely without compromising the Commission's capacity to recover from system failures and major disasters;
- (c) Metadata for records in any format should be maintained in such a way that they remain reliable and accessible for a long as required, which will be at least for the life of the records.

#### **2. File covers (folders)**

94. A file is an organized assembly of documents kept together for use and relating to a specific subject, type of transaction or area of business.

95. An official file should have three components:

- (a) Cover to protect the contents and act as a title page;
- (b) Record of the file's circulation of the contents;
- (c) Some method of securing the whole together.

96. ECA file covers (also known as jackets or folders) should be made of rigid manila paper or board, cut larger than the dimensions of the documents to be filed, and folded to enclose the documents and so minimize damage from handling and use.

97. The covers should be colour-coded for ease of recognition.

File Types	Colour
Unclassified files	Khaki
Confidential or strictly confidential Files	Red
Official status files	Blue

98. The file cover should be pre-printed with the name and logo of the Commission.

99. The file cover should include a space for the file title, file number, index headings or keywords, security marking, references to previous, subsequent or related files, and file period (i.e. the date or year of opening, and closure when known).

100. The cover should also have a grid (or ladder) for recording the file's circulation when in use. All title and reference information on the file covers is provided by the office responsible for records management function at the point of creation. A sample file cover is shown in the attached annex.

101. Individual records within the files must be secured by treasury tags or fasteners so that they are not misplaced or lost. The tag is inserted through holes punched on the left side of the folded file covers and each record within it, thus minimizing the risk of losing records.

### **3. Opening new file folders**

102. When a document comes into the records office, the Information Management Assistants or Records Coordinators must decide whether an appropriate file already exists. If no appropriate file exists, new file folders (both physical and electronic) can be created and allocated a reference and a title.

103. The reference and the title must come from the file classification scheme in order to be valid. In the electronic record-keeping system, folders for known functions are normally opened in advance. It is necessary to cross-check with the existing folders in the electronic records management system when opening the new file for paper records. If there is no folder and file number in the system corresponding to the new file being opened, a new matching folder should be opened in the system to allow emails and electronic records to be captured for the new function.

104. Files or folders should not be opened in the expectation of future correspondence, as this will lead to a waste of effort, a waste of valuable file covers and, most damaging of all, confusion in the file index and the filing system as a whole.

105. The section/unit responsible of records management functions, at the request of staff, centrally creates all files. Staff cannot create new files and folders at their discretion. To create a new file, or to open an additional part of an existing file, staff must complete an RM1 New File form and send it to the section/unit responsible for records management function electronically.

#### **4. Giving files titles**

106. File titles should be as descriptive as possible to provide adequate details of the file's actual and likely contents. It ought to trigger in the minds of the user what the file contains.

107. Titles must be as concise as possible while accurately reflecting the contents of the file. File titles are obtained from the file classification scheme, which uses codes to identify a folder's functional/activity category.

#### **5. Closing files and opening new file parts**

108. Records offices (registries) are required to close files at regular intervals. Files should be closed as soon as they become three centimetres (approximately one inch) thick, or when they have been inactive for three years, whichever is the sooner. This ensures that the files are kept to a manageable size and prevents the build-up of old and redundant papers in current records systems. Records offices must ensure that no further enclosures are added to the files after they are closed.

109. The method of closing a file is to stamp the word **CLOSED** in red ink at the top of the front cover, together with the date, thus cancelling the file's active status. The file control documentation must also be marked to show that the file has been closed and the date when this was done.

110. A new file part is created when a file has to be closed but the business on the file is continuing. The subject of the new file part remains the same. The section/unit responsible for records management function determines when a new file part should be opened. The file parts are indicated by the use of sequential letters of alphabets. Example:

<b>FMS25-07-01</b>	<b>(first part)</b>
<b>FMS25-07-01/A</b>	<b>(second part)</b>
<b>FMS25-07-01/B</b>	<b>(third part)</b>

111. Note that the reference number **FMS25-07-01** for the opened new parts cannot be changed, as many documents have already been filed in the first part of the file. No new action may be taken on a file once it is closed, and no enclosures should be added; however, closed files should be kept available in the records office for a period of time so that users may refer to them.

#### **6. Placing records in the files**

112. The maintenance of order among the records within the file is a vital requirement of filing, as it establishes the context within which the decisions and actions were taken and the sequence of those decisions and actions. Thus, the paper records should be filed in the same order as the transactions of which they form part. This is not the same as saying that the individual records are filed in their date order.

113. Place papers within a file in the order in which they are received in the registry. Write the folio number on the top right-hand corner of the document and circle the number. If the document is made up of more than one page, the whole document, not each individual page, is given a folio number.

114. Documents exceeding 25 pages (usually annexes, attachments and enclosures) should be filed in expandable file folders with the same reference number as the file folder in question.

115. Read the documents you have filed in order to see whether they mention any previous correspondence. If they do, check whether that correspondence is already on the file. If yes, then write the folio number of the previous correspondence against the reference to it in the letter you are filing. Then write the folio number of the letter you are filing on the previous letter.

### **Filing a checklist**

Ask the following questions regularly.

- Does the document belong to the file selected?
- Does the file reference on the document agree with the reference number of the file? (It should, unless it is a copy being used for cross-referencing.)
- Are all pages of a multiple-page document present?
- Are all attachments present?

### **Do not file**

- Spare copies of letters, old drafts and so on, unless there is probability that they will be significant in the foreseeable future. Such documents should either be destroyed or, if there is a genuine need to keep them, stored away from the file.
- Published material and bulky reports. Much of the published material received in records offices has no relevance to the work of the Commission. With the agreement of the Information Management Officer and Section Chiefs, this material should be sent to the Library or destroyed. Bulky published material or reports which are relevant should be marked with the file and folio number to which they relate and stored separately in the expandable file folders. Mark the covering letter to indicate the location of the published material.
- Ephemeral material such as announcements of parties, greeting cards or advertisements for events that have no relevance to the Commission.

## **7. Cross-referencing**

116. Cross-referencing is the recommended means of documenting the existence of related information located in a different section of the filing system.

117. If a single physical record or other item of correspondence relates to more than one file, it should be photocopied and the original placed on the file for which it has most relevance. Place the photocopies on the other files to which the letter relates. On the original letter, note the numbers of the files on which additional copies have been placed. Similarly, note the location of the original on each copy placed on other files. Do not delay urgent mail by this process.

118. If a single electronic record relates to more than one case, it should be cross-referenced with the related case.

119. If a letter is received which refers to earlier correspondence, write the folio number of the previous letter on the new letter and then place it on the same file as the earlier letter.

120. Papers may be removed from files only in exceptional circumstances on the instruction of the head of the records office. When this is done, place a temporary note on the file at the point from which the paper(s) have been extracted, indicating the subject of the paper(s) and where they may be found. It must be signed by the member of staff responsible for the removal.

#### **D. Controlling physical file movement**

121. Files are issued to staff in at least three circumstances:

- (a) A record arrives in the registry, is recorded and filed, and the file is passed to the member of staff responsible for the matter in question (Action Officer);
- (b) A file is to be “brought up” to the Action Officer;
- (c) The Action Officer requests the file in person by filling in the file request form or by telephone.

122. Records Coordinators must be able to determine the location of every file for which they are responsible. Each time a file moves, must be recorded in the registry. File movements are monitored by means of file movement slips, through regular file censuses and through barcode tracking for accurate record location.

#### **File census**

123. In order to confirm the location of files that are not in the registry’s custody, Records Coordinators should carry out a regular census of every file outside the registry. If no discrepancies are found, the frequency of file censuses can be reduced.

124. Registry staff must visit every action officer in the sections or divisions at regular intervals (once a week is recommended) to carry out a file census. Census forms must be signed by the staff member carrying out the census and initialled by the section or division Records Coordinator. The registry staff must check that the information on the file census form is consistent with that in the file transit book to ensure that the up-to-date location of each file is correctly recorded. If there is any discrepancy, the file transit sheet must be amended and the discrepancy reported to the head of the Records Management Unit.

#### **E. Business continuity plans**

125. Business continuity management helps ECA to prepare for and recover from a disruption to normal business operations. Business continuity planning and disaster recovery are essential elements in risk management and corporate governance. Business continuity plans identify and safeguard records considered vital to the Commission, namely:

- (a) Records that would be essential to the continued functioning or reconstitution of the Commission in the event of a disaster;
- (b) Records that are essential to ongoing protection of the Commission’s legal and financial rights.

## **1. Principles for business continuity planning**

### **(a) Assessment of records for business continuity risks**

126. Poor records and/or document management may contribute to Commission failures, embarrassment and litigation. It is important to plan and protect records and record-keeping-related business information systems from the risk of disaster to ensure the continuity of business operations in the event of any disruption.

### **(b) Business planning for records**

127. To manage records disasters, ECA addresses events that could potentially damage or destroy its records by means of disaster mitigation, disaster response, business continuity and periodic review.

## **2. Practices for business continuity planning**

128. The Commission must demonstrate compliance with ISO standard 22301<sup>38</sup> to ensure that the vital and archival records are protected over time. This also requires that:

- (a) Records and records storage are handled satisfactorily from a risk management perspective;
- (b) A current business risk impact assessment for records exists;
- (c) A current business continuity plan for records exists and is adequately rehearsed;
- (d) The business risk assessment and business continuity plan for records are reviewed and updated;
- (e) The control of vital records and archival records is maintained even in the event of a major disaster;
- (f) The internal and external clients are satisfied with the speed and comprehensiveness of the resumption of full business operations following a disaster;
- (g) The totality of records-related risk management is such that any post-disaster inquiry clears or praises every aspect of the records-related handling of the disaster.

## **V. Management of email records**

### **Introduction**

129. Email has increasingly become an important business tool in the United Nations for both internal and external communication because emails constitute records that provide evidence of and information about the Organization's business transactions.

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<sup>38</sup> ISO 22301:2012 Societal security – Business continuity management systems – Requirements.

130. Emails which are created or received by ECA staff and which fall under the definition of records must be saved into a record-keeping system to provide evidence of business activities and meet the Commission's business, legal and accountability requirements where record-keeping is concerned. Disposal must be authorized in accordance with the relevant disposal schedule of the specific record series.

131. Important business information may be lost if email records are not managed properly. It is the responsibility of all ECA staff to ensure that they save email records into a record-keeping system as soon as possible after receipt or dispatch.

## **1. Email records**

132. Email records are messages created, sent or received within an email system that are required by the Commission to control, support or document the delivery of programmes, to carry out operations, to make decisions or to account for activities.<sup>39</sup>

133. Examples of email records include:

- (a) A communication between staff in which a formal approval is recorded;
- (b) Messages that reflect the position or business of the Commission;
- (c) Messages that initiate, authorize or complete a business transaction;
- (d) Messages received from external sources that form part of an official record;
- (e) Copies containing more or less information than the original record;
- (f) Original messages containing policies or directives, where the information does not exist in another form;
- (g) Messages related to work schedules and assignments;
- (h) Agenda and minutes of meetings;
- (i) Briefing notes, final reports and recommendations;
- (j) A discussion between staff which results in a decision being formulated;
- (k) Business information distributed by email as one or more attachments.

## **2. Short-term (transitory) emails**

134. Short-term-value emails (also known as ephemeral emails) are emails used to facilitate the Commission's business but which are of such low or short-term value that they may be routinely destroyed once reference ceases under the authority of the relevant disposal schedule.

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<sup>39</sup> United Nations, Archives and Records Management Section. Managing emails as records. New York. Available from <https://archives.un.org/content/managing-emails-records>.

135. Examples of transitory emails include:

- (a) Duplicate copies of bulk/circular emails;
- (b) Notices of meetings, holidays, etc.;
- (c) Internal work-related email received through the use of the CC or BCC fields;
- (d) Email cover notes;
- (e) Informal email messages (staff newsletters, messages marked FYI (For your information), pamphlets or flyers distributed via email).

### **3. Emails with specific attributes**

#### **(a) Emails with attachments**

136. Attachments to business emails must be saved into a record-keeping system. Documents attached to business email messages are an important part of the business record and must be saved with the email message.

#### **(b) CC and BCC fields**

137. If an employee receives a copy of a business email from an external party by means of the CC or BCC field, the primary recipient needs to save the email in a record-keeping system. If the email was sent by another ECA staff member, only the sender should save the email into a record-keeping system.

#### **(c) Email threads**

138. An email discussion thread is an email conversation or series of related messages. Each individual message responds to an earlier message, which has been sent or forwarded to many people.

139. Rather than save every individual email in a thread, you may selectively save emails at key points in the thread or the final email in the thread, provided that the previous emails quoted in the body of the saved email have not been altered in any way.

## **4. Capturing and maintaining emails in a record-keeping system**

140. The ECA electronic records management system provides the required functionality to capture emails and link them with the business activities which generate them, and to related records.

### **Principles of email capture**

141. Emails must be reproduced and viewed in their original electronic format as an email system (such as Outlook) message along with its transmission and receipt data, or an attachment such as a

Word or Excel document.

142. Emails must be captured and filed using the file classification structure in order to maintain a link between messages, attachments and any other related records.

143. Only one format of each email record needs to be kept. If you have filed an email record in the electronic records management system, you can delete the copy in Outlook.

144. It is not advisable to file and store email records in personal computer and directory work spaces. This limits access to the records and creates a major problem when a staff member leaves the organization, or is not in the office, and the work needs to continue.

## **5. Email records of departing staff members**

145. Staff are required to perform a clean-up of all email messages in the email system prior to separating from the Commission or transferring to another organization.

146. The section/unit responsible for records management function in collaboration with the Human Resources Services Section, applies clearance procedures to all staff separating from the Commission to ensure that records and emails are identified and filed so that they can be searched for, retrieved and retained for as long as needed.<sup>40</sup>

# **VI. Correspondence management**

## **A. Introduction**

147. For the purposes of this manual, correspondence includes any communication related to the Commission's business. The manual establishes systematic procedures for receiving, recording/logging, appropriately processing and responding to and creating an audit trail of all correspondence received and dispatched by the Commission.

148. ECA correspondence management provides an electronic means of storing, retrieving and routing correspondence for review and approval. The system is also used to track all the incoming and outgoing correspondence of the Commission and make it available to all application users in accordance with their roles and access.

## **B. Types of correspondence**

### **1. Principal correspondence**

149. Principal correspondence is correspondence for which, because of its source, the Office of the ECA Executive Secretary controls its subject matter, sensitivity, urgency or possible impact on the Commission's regulatory responsibilities. Such correspondence generally deals with substantive matters originated by high-level officials within or outside the Commission. It can also constitute a response to incoming communications regarding substantive matters or substantive complaints from any source, including external entities.

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<sup>40</sup> ECA records management policy.

150. In other instances, incoming communications are designated as principal correspondence because they are received from high-level government entities, heads of government agencies or their principal assistants. This also applies to communications regarding ECA policies and procedures from member States, local\*\*, host governments or foreign governments and international organizations, with the exception of routine requests for information.

## **2. General correspondence (Chronos)**

151. General correspondence comprises of all other correspondence received by various offices of the Commission. These types of correspondence are not directly linked to the activities of the receiving offices, but are important because of their information value. Such correspondence needs to be appropriately managed as it may be needed from time to time by staff for reference.

152. Correspondence categorized as general (chrono) by the receiving office forms part of the core function of the offices, and as such offices cannot be sending out general correspondence. For example, an announcement from the Division of Administration regarding holidays for a given year would be a primary record related to a function of that office but general correspondence for the receiving offices. The Division of Administration becomes the office of record responsible for the life cycle of the records. Furthermore, the retention period of such correspondence will differ from the office of record and receiving offices, in which it is considered only as a convenient copy.

## **3. Inter-office memo**

153. Inter-office memos are internal correspondence between individuals, divisions, sections and units of the same Commission. They refer to matters such as enquiries, acknowledgements, replies, orders, invitations and appointment letters.

154. Such correspondence is filed/captured in the offices either as a convenient copy or as an essential record, depending on the activities mandated to the creating or receiving offices. For example, a recruitment memo from a section may be filed as a convenient copy in the section's registry but filed as an essential record in the staff recruitment folders in the human resources registry. The Human Resources Services Section is mandated to deal with human resources matters, while sections are its clients.

## **C. Managing incoming correspondence**

155. Incoming correspondence will reach the records offices in a number of different ways. Some will come through the mail, some by hand, some by telex, fax or electronic mail. Records staff must deal promptly and accurately with many different kinds of correspondence.

156. Care must be taken to ensure the contents of letters are not damaged when opening the envelopes. Enclosures received loose or separated from their covering documents must be attached to the relevant documents, taking care not to damage cheques, certificates or similar items. All attachments must be noted on the covering document. This is particularly important when the enclosures are valuable or are personal papers.

157. Certificates, deeds and other legal documents require special care. Place such documents in separate envelopes, noting the contents and the number of the file on the outside. These are recorded in an incoming register book and then stored in a safe place and cross-referenced on the file.

158. After the mail has been opened and all enclosures accounted for, each letter must be registered by a designated officer in the Incoming Correspondence Register (see annex).

159. Incoming electronic correspondence is to be filed and shared electronically ONLY.

160. Incoming paper correspondence will be digitized, filed in the record-keeping system and shared electronically.

161. The physical copy will be filed in the appropriate folder and maintained in the section/unit registries for reference.

#### **D. Managing outgoing correspondence**

162. Every letter leaving the Commission should be dispatched through the records office of the division or section concerned to the ECA Registry Unit (Mailing Centre) for further processing or subregional offices.

163. The letters must quote the full address and reference number as well as the reference(s) of any other correspondence quoted in the text of the letter.

164. Security or privacy markings are typed in a prominent position at the top and bottom of each sheet. Once a letter has been signed by an action officer it must be returned to the records office for dispatch.

165. Records office staff are responsible for maintaining a record of what is dispatched by means of the Outgoing Correspondence Register (see annex).

166. Letters to be delivered by hand are recorded in the Mail Dispatch Book (see annex).

167. Outgoing correspondence on paper will be scanned and a copy filed appropriately in the record-keeping system.

168. Outgoing (paper) correspondence will be sealed and sent through the e-registry system via the Mailing Centre.

169. The original paper correspondence (with signature) will be filed in the appropriate physical folders and maintained in the section/unit registries if the correspondence is sent out by email.

170. Inter-office physical correspondence will be sent out using the Mail Dispatch Book that records the receipt information.

#### **E. Assigning a reference number to correspondence**

171. The reference number or identifying number is a unique number assigned to each piece of outgoing correspondence to help record-keeping, filing, tracking, retrieval and referencing in the future. It is usually used to track both the hard and the soft copy of the letter in the file or folder in which it is to be found.

172. If the letter refers to an existing matter, then a reference number should be included. A reference number will help to relate the letter to a specific matter and will help in filing the letter appropriately.

173. If the recipient of the letter has already provided you with his or her reference number, you should always quote this number when corresponding. This reference number helps the recipient relate the letter to the appropriate matter. For example:

**Our Ref:** MPD20-01-03-6-1  
**Ref:** ISA- KMC/01/120

174. The reference letter number gives some idea to all concerned what the correspondence pertains to. It relates to the activity of the section or division.

175. The first step in assigning a reference number is to determine the appropriate file series. In principle, the file series is a clearly identifiable principal function. For instance, file series based on some sections within ECA include the following:

**Human resources management**

Staff administration  
Staff development  
Staff selection and recruitment

**Programme budgeting**

Budget preparations  
Budget allotment, monitoring and reporting  
Posts management

176. If, for example, correspondence to be created concerns human resources management, and staff recruitment for the post of Administrative Assistant, its reference number will be written as **HRS29-05-01-01-01**, in which

**HRS29** Human resources management  
**05** Staff recruitment  
**01** Administrative Assistant  
**01** Correspondence  
**01** Sequential numbers – **01** being the first letter in the folder

177. Reference numbers for correspondence indicate where the correspondence should be filed or traced. They also indicate the number of folios. That simplifies the arrangement of records in the physical files.

178. Staff are encouraged to liaise with the records coordinators in the respective sections or divisions when they need reference numbers for correspondence. They are further encouraged to have physical files with they need to write/reply to correspondence for easy reference.

## **VII. Management of semi-current records**

### **A. Introduction**

179. This section defines the procedures for identifying, transferring and managing semi-current records in the Records Centre. Records that are in full daily use within the Commission are often called “current records”. When, after some time, they are no longer used regularly but must still be kept, they become “semi-current records”.

180. The records still retain primary value but should be removed from expensive office space to a low-cost storage facility because there is no immediate administrative or operational need for them. After some time, many of these records are deemed obsolete and can be destroyed, while others are retained for their ongoing value as evidence or for research. These records become “non-current records”, some of which are kept as archives.

(a) ***Current records:*** Records regularly used for the conduct of the current business of an organization or individual. Also known as active records. Current records will normally be maintained in or near their place of origin or in a registry or records office.

(b) ***Semi-current records:*** Records required only infrequently in the conduct of business. Semi-current records will normally be maintained in a record centre or other offsite intermediate storage pending their ultimate disposal.

(c) ***Non-current records:*** Records no longer needed for the conduct of current business. Also known as inactive records.

(d) ***Records centre:*** a building or part of a building designed or adapted for the low-cost storage, maintenance and communication of semi-current records pending their ultimate disposition.

### **B. Decongestion of records offices**

181. Semi-current records are systematically identified from the registries through a process called decongestion. Through this process, records of an ephemeral nature are also identified and set aside for immediate disposal.

#### **1. Setting decongestion criteria**

182. Setting decongestion criteria is the most important step in undertaking the decongestion process. The established criteria provide guidance to undertake the assignment. In this regard, two criteria have been developed for the decongestion process in all ECA section, division and subregional office registries:

(a) Records, files and documents which have not been active for three years should be identified and separated;

(b) The time during which records are required for active use (as specified in the retention and disposal schedules) must have expired before records can be identified for transfer.

183. Current and semi-current records shall be processed as records to be transferred to the Records Centre.

184. The following examples illustrate how these criteria can be applied in the decongestion process.

(a) All files whose last folio was created three years before the current year should be regarded as semi-active records. This means that there has been no activity for the past three years. Such files should therefore be removed from the shelves and prepared for transfer to the Records Centre.

(b) If the file is assigned retention schedule “Current year + three years” (**C+3**) and if the date of the last folio in the file is later than three years ago, the file should be considered active and should be left on the shelf.

## **2. Marking of file storage locations**

185. Label all the storage equipment such as cabinets which is located in the registry following the original order. If records have been arranged vertically, for example, the numbering has to follow the same order. The exercise will enable the persons carrying out the decongestion process to work comfortably with the records.

## **3. Listing files from the shelves**

186. After labelling all the storage facilities, the working space has to be moved closer to the storage equipment for easy retrieval of files and their recording on special forms. During this process two forms are mainly used, the Records Centre Transfer Form and the Records Centre Inventory Form (see annex). The Records Centre Transfer Form is mainly used to record all semi-active records which have been identified during the decongestion process. This form is called a transfer form because the files and documents recorded have to be transferred to a low-cost storage area, namely the Records Centre.

187. The Records Centre Inventory Form is used to record all files or documents which have been identified as active records. In accordance with the established criteria, active records are those which are still in use in transacting the Commission’s business. Active records can be subject files, personnel files, case files etc., which need the attention of action officers. The divisions and sections from which records are drawn has to be indicated on this form. The location from where the records or file has or have been obtained has to be shown, the file reference number has to be recorded, the file title has to be clearly written, and the year the file was opened and the latest date of the current folio must be shown.

188. After recording all required details, the cabinet/shelves location number, e.g. FC.1/10 or WS.2/11, must be marked with a pencil on the top right-hand side of a file. Marking location numbers on files helps records officers to re-shelve the files easily in the appropriate location.

## **4. Re-shelving active files**

189. This is the process of taking back the identified active file to its original place. The new

indexing system can be prepared for these files, and file jackets and files can be allocated new file titles if possible and necessary. The titles of the files should be assessed to check that they reflect functions and not the title of the documents in it.

## C. Transfer of records to the Records Centre

### 1. Preparing records for transfer

190. The identified semi-current records should be organized into records series arranged in accordance with a filing system or maintained as a unit because they result from the same accumulation or filing process, or the same activity. The records series are listed in your retention schedule. Examples of records series are: contract files, staff medical files, journal vouchers, staff recruitment etc. The records should be packed in boxes obtained from the Records Centre, clearly separating administrative from substantive records.

191. All records identified as archival materials from the registries of the subregional offices and the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning should be prepared and transferred to ECA headquarters for archiving. The files should be packed in the order in which they were created and used – the same series and the same retention period.

192. The standard acid-free archive box should be used for packing the files.

193. During packing of files and documents, the following guidelines should be considered:

- (a) Files should be placed in boxes vertically with the opening side facing upwards;
- (b) Records should be packed in the same arrangement as that in which they are created and maintained by the offices. Do not create a new filing system;
- (c) Files and documents must be packed firmly in the boxes to enhance easy retrieval and handling, but the boxes should not be overfilled;
- (d) The contents of each box should be limited to one record series.

194. Before dispatching the boxes, label each box with three numbers. These are:

- (a) The series number, assigned by the office of origin (refer to the file plan);
- (b) The consignment number, assigned by the ECA Records Management Unit;
- (c) The box number, assigned by the office of origin.

195. Records Coordinators will fill in each request for records transfer, on a Records Centre Transfer Form (see annex). Each file or document placed in a box has to be recorded on this form with complete information such as the action category, date, location and box number. Records Coordinators will arrange with Information Management Officers for the records to be picked up and transferred to the ECA Records Centre.

## **2. Identification of the originating office**

196. The office that has originated or used records while they were still current retains a direct interest in what happens to them after retirement. Offices that have transferred records to the Records Centre need to know where they are and how to access them. Equally, the Records Centre staff must always know which office has transferred any particular records and which office retains continuing responsibility for them.

197. To ensure that originating offices keep track of their transferred records, and that the Records Centre can keep track of which offices have transferred records to it, the Records Centre allocates a code number to each records office.

Date of issue	Name of record office	Code number
20/05/2017	Division of Administration	100
20/05/2017	Facilities Management	101
15/06/2017	Human Resources Services Section	102

198. Code numbers should be allocated serially, at the time when the first transfer of records is requested to be made by the office in question. The code numbers should never be repeated. The Records Centre should keep a register of code numbers. This register will be one of the Records Centre's own permanent records.

199. The code number should be written on each transfer list, disposal form and so on. It should be quoted on all correspondence with the records office, and files of such correspondence should be filed under the code number by the Records Centre.

200. When an office has been allocated a code number, this number should remain permanent. If, as a result of administrative reforms, a particular records office is merged with another, the new records office should be given a new code number. The old one will remain in use to identify transactions that occurred and records that were created before the reorganization.

## **3. Determining the action category**

201. In determining the action category to be filled in on the Records Centre Transfer Form, the following should be used as a guide:

(a) The approved list of disposal schedules should be consulted. Look at the appropriate schedule(s) and decide what is the correct action category of these records, and the appropriate action date;

(b) If the action category is "DESTROY", this instruction should be entered in the action category space. The destruction date should be written into the appropriate column of each copy of the transfer list. There must be only one destruction date for each box, so take the date of the most recent record as the destruction date for the whole box;

(c) If the action category is "REVIEW", this instruction should be entered in the action category space. The review date should be entered in the appropriate column of each copy of the Records Centre transfer list. There must be only one review date per box, so take the date of the most recent record as the review date for the whole;

(d) If the action category is “PERMANENT”, write on the transfer list the date on which the box is to be transferred to the Archives. Also write that the action is to transfer it to the Archives. There must be only one transfer date per box, so take the latest date as the effective one for the whole box.

202. Note that no box should contain a mixture of records that have to be treated differently. For example, a box should not contain some records to be destroyed, some to be reviewed and some to be transferred to the archival facility. If such a box is found, the records in it should be divided into the different categories and each group put into a separate box. Whenever changes like this are made, they should be recorded on all copies of the transfer list, and the matter brought to the attention of the office concerned.

203. All actions should be carried out on the whole consignment at one time rather than on single boxes. The action dates entered in the transfer lists help the Records Centre staff to carry out the arrangement. It is important that action dates for the whole consignment be coordinated at the time they are received in the Records Centre. However, if this is not done, the action dates entered in the transfer list will bring boxes up for action. Staff can then coordinate the appropriate action so that it takes place for a large group of records at the same time, saving resources.

#### **4. Transfer of records to the Records Centre**

204. Upon receipt of a request to transfer records for an office, the Records Centre will send empty boxes and supply a Records Centre Transfer Form. Once all transfer documentation has been approved, the Records Centre will notify the pick-up date to the Records Coordinators. When the consignment is received in the Record Centre, staff should place the boxes that make up the consignment in order, and deal with them in sequence. In doing this, the following steps should be taken:

205. Process the consignment of records received in the Records Centre:

(a) Remove the Records Centre transfer form from the box;

(b) Check that the form has been completed correctly, with an adequate description of the contents, but with the box number, location and action date columns left blank;

(c) Check that the contents are actually the same as those listed on the transfer list, that the files are in order and that they have been properly prepared for transfer. Records should be clean and orderly, without metal clips or messy ephemeral additions;

(d) If it appears that the records sent in the boxes are not the correct ones, or if they are not in order, or if they have not been prepared properly, the matter should be reported to the Records Centre manager. It is particularly important that the covering dates of the records transferred are entered on the transfer list, because it is from these that the action date is calculated;

206. Prepare the boxes of the consignment received in the Records Centre:

(a) Each box should be marked in sequence with the next available box number. To find what this number is, consult the list at the front of the Records Centre location register (see annex);

(b) Carry on numbering in order. When each box in the consignment has been numbered, the numbers that have been used should be crossed off the list, so that they will not be reused by mistake. Note that box numbers are not the same as location codes. A location code refers only to shelf space. Box numbers are never reused, and always go in sequence from the start to the finish of each consignment. The next consignment continues with the next box number. The purpose of the list in the front of the location register is simply to help keep track of the numbers used, to ensure that there are no gaps or duplications in box numbering. Location numbers are reused only when all the contents of the box at that location have been destroyed or transferred to the archival facility;

(c) The box numbers should be written on all copies of the Records Centre transfer list, in the appropriate column.

## **5. Distribution of the Records Centre transfer form**

207. Three completed copies of the Records Centre transfer list should be distributed as follows:

(a) The first copy should go in the Master Transfers File. This file contains the transfer list, in a separate file for each transferring office, in the date order as received. Records office code numbers may be used to identify the file for the office of origin;

(b) The second copy should go in the Action Dates File. This file holds the Records Centre transfer list in a single sequence by action date, irrespective of the office of origin;

(c) The third copy should go in the Records Office Transfers File. This file holds forms to be sent back to the transferring records office for retention as a permanent record for that office's use. Offices will consult this form to find out the box number of any record they require. On receipt of this copy the Records Office should destroy the fourth copy which it kept at the time of the transfer.

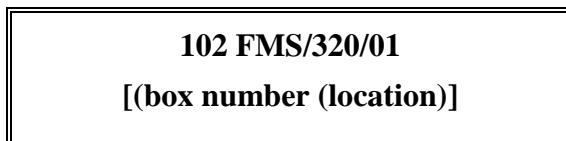
## **6. Labelling of the boxes**

208. It is also useful to attach a label to each box. This label should indicate:

(a) The originating office code number;

(b) The box number;

(c) The location code.



209. For security reasons, it is important that these should be the only marks on the outside of boxes, so that unauthorized people cannot easily identify records, particularly sensitive or confidential files.

210. If labels are unreliable, perhaps because heat or humidity prevents them from adhering to the boxes properly, the information should instead be written directly on the box.

## **7. Storage of the records in the Records Centre**

211. The next vacant storage location is then found from the Records Centre Location Register. As far as possible, it is best to keep consignments together in one block, because they should have a common action date. However, for the sake of economy, locations for the consignment may be chosen at random from among the shelf spaces that are vacant.

212. In general, it is best not to allocate blocks of shelf space to particular office, as this wastes space and creates difficulties in the management of the Records Centre. If there is a shortage of shelf space, individual boxes may be given locations randomly; but it is important to be sure that any particular box (and the documents inside it) can be quickly identified.

213. Boxes should be placed in the shelf spaces that correspond to their location codes. Their box numbers are then recorded in the Records Centre Location Register alongside the correct location code.

214. Records Centre staff should always be able to find the location code of any box from its number, and they should always be able to go straight to the shelf space from the location code.

## **8. Updating of the Location Register and Accessions Register**

215. The location register holds the following information:

- (a) Records office code;
- (b) Consignment number;
- (c) Box numbers;
- (d) Location codes.

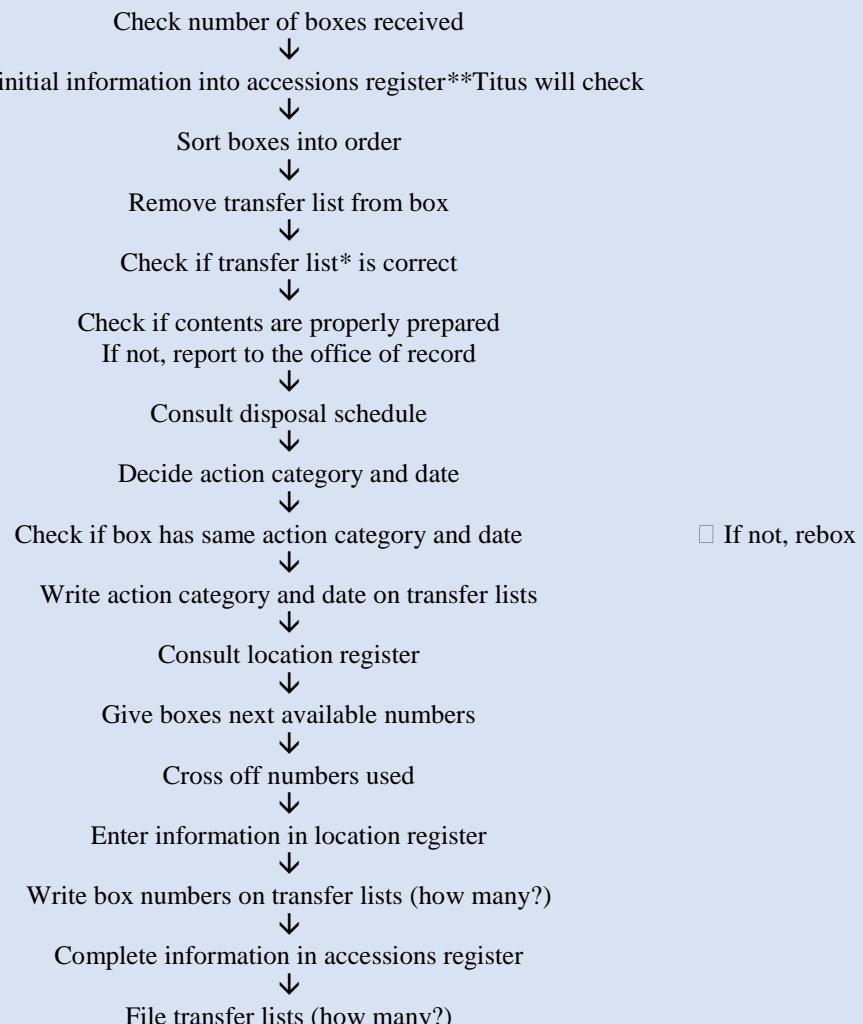
216. The location column in the Records Centre Location Register should contain a list of all the empty locations. If new shelves are added to the Records Centre, the new locations must be added to the register.

217. At least after every two months, Records Centre staff should count up the number of boxes transferred by each records office and enter this information in the front of the Master Transfers File. This allows the records and archives facility to be aware of the level of records activity in each office.

218. It is also good to have statistical records, which act as an index of transferring offices. The index will show all who have transferred records to the Records Centre, together with information on their production of records and the amount of space they occupy (see below).

Statistical analysis			
Division:	Records office code 100 Office of the Director Division of Administration		
Consignment numbers	Number of boxes	Destruction	Notes
1	4	3	Shredded: confidential
2	6	2	
3	8	7	Shredded: confidential
4	2	1	
5	9	4	Includes oversized registers
6	1	0	
7	9	7	Includes electronic records
[continued]			
Running totals:	--	39	24

## 9. Summary of key procedures in transferring records to the Records Centre



## **10. Retrieval and use of records held by the Records Centre**

219. Accurate and timely retrieval of records is critical for the operation of a records centre. Users are advised of the scheduling options provided by the Records Centre for routine and emergency service requests, which depend on staffing configurations and other factors. Records Centre staff should be able and willing to provide staff with advice on the use of the facilities. Staff should ensure that there is controlled access to the records held for each office.

220. Originating or transferring offices have a right to consult any of their records held in the Records Centre. Such records should be returned to the Records Centre when the consultation is completed. It is the duty of the Records Centre staff to see that records issued in this way are duly returned.

221. In general, Records Centre facilities are not available to the public. Public access to documents is provided by the Archive, subject to United Nations statutory provisions.

### **(a) Retrieval of files and boxes**

222. Only the office that created the record, or its successor office, may borrow a record from the Records Centre. Staff of the creating office should make a request to the Records Centre through Records Coordinators in their sections or divisions. Requests to borrow records may be made by email, by telephone or in person. The Records Coordinators will then consult the Records Centre, which will retrieve the records. The Records Centre will plan for regular deliveries of requested records to the records offices; this will depend on the availability of staff, which will determine whether this service will be performed by the Records Centre or by registry staff in the creating offices.

223. The Records Centre should be able to receive requests by telephone or electronically by email. Users can also perform a search at their workstation using record-keeping software, locate the box or file they need, verify that it is available, and request the item.

224. At the Records Centre, the retrieval information needs to be transformed into a bar code label or report. Labels need to be generated and affixed to the box or file and routing envelope.

### **(b) Reactivation of an inactive file**

225. In the course of time, a decongested file might sometimes need to be reactivated simply because the function represented in that particular file may have been rejuvenated or the project has been renewed. A file can be reactivated only if it has been requested several times, or if new documents of the same function have been received. It is advisable to be careful when reactivating a file, and if possible to consult users before deciding to do so if a file needs to be rejuvenated:

(a) The registry will be required to reactivate the file and bring it back to the active files for normal use;

(b) The registry will be required to re-examine the former title in order to make changes where necessary to suit the current function;

(c) The registry staff will open a new file folder by copying the title and the reference number of the current file and then transfer all folios to the newly created file;

(d) The registry staff will register the file in control books and delete the file from the inactive file list, i.e. in the Record Centre Transfer form.

226. The responsibilities of the Records Centre staff are as follows:

(a) To provide an efficient retrieval service for sections that need to consult their records kept in the Records Centre;

(b) To facilitate the authorized and timely destruction of records that are no longer needed for ongoing business and lack archival value;

(c) To ensure that records with archival value are transferred to the Archive;

(d) To provide users of the Records Centre with advice and help on the use of the facilities.

## **11. Security measures in the Records Centre**

227. A high level of security is required in the Records Centre at all times. The reason is that records held there include those which are classified, arising from all levels of the Commission's corporate activities. Suspicions of poor security should be reported and addressed so as to maintain the confidence of clients. To maintain an adequate level of security, the following steps should be taken:

(a) Persons other than the Records Centre staff should not be allowed to enter into the storage area without specific permission;

(b) All external doors must be kept locked (subject to safety regulations). Keys must be numbered and kept in a safe place. Spare keys for use in an emergency should be kept in a location noted in the emergency plan;

(c) Preventive measures against fire, flood and so on should always be operational;

(d) Records should not be issued to anyone other than official representatives of the transferring office;

(e) Classified records should be kept in designated areas in the Records Centre. Records Centre staff should always activate the procedure for declassifying records;

(f) Smoking and eating should not be allowed in the Records Centre.

## **VIII. Records appraisal and disposition of records**

### **A. Introduction**

228. This section describes the steps required for the appraisal of records, the disposition of records and their transfer to the Archive. The status of records in the Records Centre must be reviewed annually so that all those scheduled for action are dealt with appropriately. Action dates in the files should be consulted at the beginning of each year to identify files which are earmarked for disposition in that year.

## **B. Principles of appraisal, retention and disposal**

### **1. Appraisal of records**

229. The purpose of appraisal (sometimes referred to as evaluation or selection) is twofold:

(a) To decide what records need to be kept and for how long in order to allow the Commission to continue its work. This is known as appraisal for “continuing utility”;

(b) To decide what records need to be permanently preserved because of their enduring value. The records have purposes other than those for which they were created, such as historical research. This is known as appraisal for “enduring value”.

230. Appraisal involves establishing what the records are (or what they will be once they are created), who creates them and why, how they relate to the creating office’s functions and to other records, and how they are used, when and by whom. Once all this information is known, the continuing utility or enduring value of the records may be assessed.

231. Through appraisal, it is possible to dispose of records promptly when their continuing value for business purposes has expired, whether that disposal is by destruction or by transfer for archival preservation. It is important, however, that records should not be disposed of either too late or too early in their life cycle. If disposed of too early, records with continuing utility or enduring value may be destroyed. If they are disposed of too late, resources are wasted storing and maintaining unneeded records.

### **2. Retention of records**

232. The principle of retention should be followed after the task of determining the life expectancy of records has been completed. Records will be assigned retention periods. The retention process will maintain records for continuing use, either in the office of origin, in a records centre or in an archival facility. Therefore, records that have been retained for use must remain accessible. If records no longer have continuing utility and have no enduring value, they should be destroyed. If they no longer have continuing utility but have enduring value, they should be preserved in an archival institution.

### **3. Disposal of records**

233. Records disposal is the final stage of record management in which records of continuing value are transferred to the Archives while those of no further value are permanently destroyed by incineration, maceration, pulping, shredding or another secure method.

### **4. Implementing appraisal of records\**

234. Effective appraisal, retention and disposal are dependent on effective records management programme that controls records throughout their life cycle. Well-documented retention and disposal schedules are supported by appropriate methods of carrying out the appraisal. The best method an appraiser can apply is to examine each record series individually. This is particularly important because record series are homogenous and relate the functions, activities and business process of offices within the Commission.

235. The task of records appraisal should be carried out in a disciplined manner, as there may be a temptation to read the entire record or file. Instead, the task should comprise the assessment of the entire records series rather than proceeding file by file or item by item.

236. The value of a record can be established from:

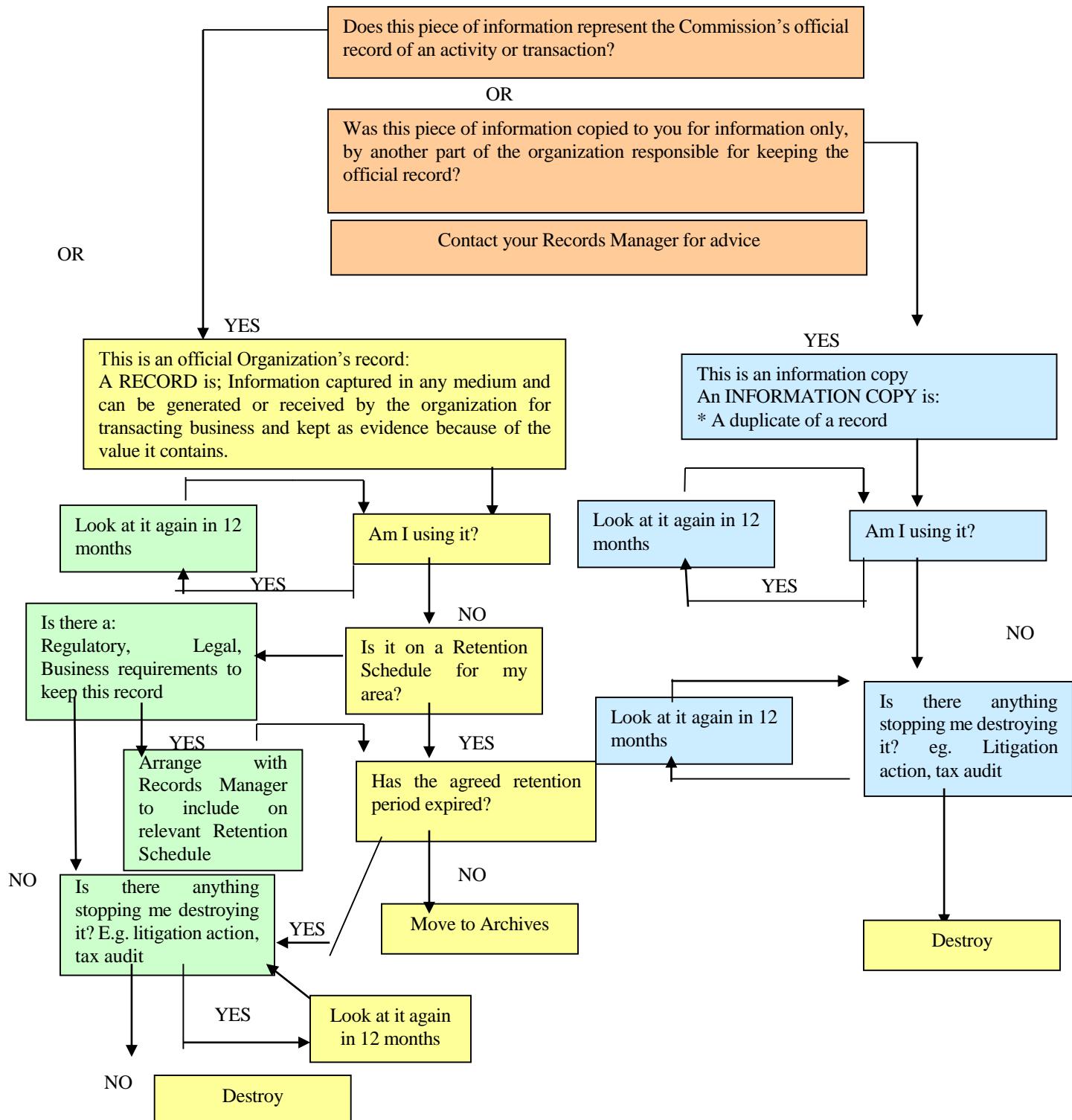
(a) The description of the record series, or the individual record in the case of a file title, which usually reflects the contents;

(b) The grade and responsibilities of the individuals who created or used the records, i.e., the more senior the individual or the greater his or her responsibilities, the more important a document is. The list of users can be obtained from the transit ladder on the files;

(c) Checks on the origin of inward communications, as this can help identify which office, section, division or agency corresponded to the Commission, in order to determine whether the record should be kept for evidential or informational value or can be destroyed, as its origin can be ascertained from where it was created.

237. The following graphic\*\* offers a quick guide to determining the value of records and taking an immediate decision as to what\*\*, why, how and when a record can be disposed of.

## QUICK SCAN OF RECORDS APPRAISAL DECISION



Source: Magaya, C., 2000. *Fundamentals in Records Management*.

## **5. Principles governing the destruction of records**

238. ECA has adopted and uses guidelines from the Headquarters Archives and Records Management Section in matters relating to the destruction of records. The destruction of records should be:

- Authorized
- Appropriate (irreversible and environmental friendly)
- Secure/confidential
- Timely
- Documented

### **(a) Authorized**

239. While disposal schedules set a minimum period for retention, it is also important to ensure that the business unit has no further business or administrative needs for the records. This can be done by ensuring that there are appropriate internal authorization or approval processes in place, for example, by providing appropriate staff with lists of records due for destruction.

240. A business unit must not dispose of any records required for current or pending action or where the records may be required as evidence in an internal or external investigation. A business unit should not destroy records that are the subject of an access request.

241. Once all requirements for retaining records have been met, an appropriate officer should give the final internal approval for the destruction of records. Each business unit should ensure that an officer is nominated and made responsible for this process.

### **(b) Appropriate (irreversible and environmentally friendly)**

242. Destruction of records should be irreversible. This means that there is no reasonable risk of the information being recovered again. Failure to ensure the total destruction of records may lead to the unauthorized release of sensitive information. In addition, records should be destroyed in an environmentally friendly manner. Both paper and microforms should be recycled where possible.

### **(c) Secure/confidential**

243. Records should always be disposed of with the same level of security that was maintained during the life of the records. Wherever possible, destruction of records should be supervised by an officer of the United Nations or by another authorized agent if destruction has been contracted out.

244. Extra care should be given to records containing sensitive personal information. These should be disposed of securely to ensure the information is safeguarded against loss, unauthorized access, use or disclosure.

245. Lockable containers may be used for particularly sensitive records. Sensitive records that are not binned should be transported in totally enclosed and lockable vehicles (to prevent records “falling off the back of a lorry”) and destroyed in the presence of an officer of your business unit. Sensitive records may also be shredded in-house before being sent for pulping. Any in-house shredding should still be approved through the normal internal and external approval processes.

**(d) Timely**

246. While records should not be destroyed while there is still a need for them, it is also important not to keep records longer than is necessary, to minimize storage costs and retrieval efficiency. If a decision is made to retain records longer than the minimum retention period, a record of the reasons for the decision should be documented to assist with disposal at a later date.

247. Records are usually destroyed when they have reached the end of a specified retention period. However, prior to their destruction, you must ensure that they are no longer required. Therefore, timely destruction must be balanced by internal authorization.

**(e) Documented**

248. The destruction of all records must be documented, so that your business unit is able to ascertain whether a record has been destroyed. Proof of destruction may be required in investigation proceedings or in response to access requests.

249. Record-keeping systems and any other documentation should note which retention schedule authorizes the destruction of the records. The specific schedule number should be documented along with the date of destruction.

250. You may also wish to keep a destruction register linking individual records to be destroyed to consignments sent for destruction. This register, together with a certificate of destruction, will serve as proof that records have actually been destroyed.

251. The certificate of destruction should be placed on a file together with any other destruction documentation, for example, records of internal approval. A record of the method of destruction should also be placed on the file if this is not already noted on the certificate of destruction.

## Annex

### I. Sample file cover

 United Nations Economic Commission for Africa										PART:	FILE NO.
TITLE:											
CONNECTED FILES Previous Subsequent											
PERIOD FROM _____ TO _____						SECURITY MARK					

### INDEX HEADINGS

Date	Referred To	Room No.	P. A. B. F.	Date	Initial/ Name		Date	Referred To	Room No.	P. A. B. F.	Date	Initial/ Name

P.A – Put Away

B.F – Bring Forward

**II. File census form**

<b>File Census Form</b>		
DATE: _____		
<b>File Ref Number</b>	<b>File Title</b>	<b>Location/Officer</b>
SIGNED _____	INITIALLED _____	

**III. Incoming correspondence register**

<b>Incoming Correspondence Register</b>							
<b>(1) Serial Number</b>	<b>(2) Date of Letter</b>	<b>(3) Date Received</b>	<b>(4) From whom Received</b>	<b>(5) [Agency] Reference</b>	<b>(6) Subject</b>	<b>(7) Officer to Whom File Passed, and Date Filed</b>	<b>(8) File Number</b>

**IV. Outgoing correspondence register**

<b>Outgoing Correspondence Register</b>						
<b>(1) Serial Number</b>	<b>(2) Date Received for Dispatch</b>	<b>(3) Date Dispatched</b>	<b>(4) Subject</b>	<b>(5) Reference Number</b>	<b>(6) Addressee</b>	<b>(7) Mode of Dispatch</b>

**V. Mail Dispatch Book**

<b>Mail Dispatch Book</b>				
(1) Date Dispatched	(2) Reference Number	(3) Team Assistant's Name	(4) Name of Agency	(5) Name and Signature Of Receiving Officer and Date

## VI. Records Centre transfer form

<b>Records Centre Transfer Form</b>					
Continuation Page No.....					
Division/Section _____		Code _____			
Unit _____		Consignment No. _____			
Record Office _____					
Action Category (destroy, review, permanent) _____		For records centre Use			
Box No.	Title/Description of Records	Ref. Nos.	Covering Dates	Action Date	Records Centre Loc. No.

**VII. Records Centre request form**

<b>Records Centre Request Form</b>	
Box number _____	Location _____
Records Office code number _____	
Agency/Unit _____	
File number _____	
File title or description of record required _____ _____	
Date loaned _____	
Signature of issuing officer _____	
Signature of receiving officer _____	
Reminder form sent _____	
Second reminder form sent _____	
Reported to Records Centre manager _____	
Date returned _____	

**VIII. Records Centre inventory form**

<b>Records Centre Inventory Form</b>								
Date Received	Name/Address Depositing Office	Records Office Code Number	Consignment Number	Number of Boxes	Location Numbers Used	Action Category (add date when completed)		Comments

## **IX. Records Centre transfer form**

<b>Records Centre Transfer Form</b>					
Continuation Page No.....					
Division/Section _____		Code _____			
Unit _____		Consignment No. _____			
Record Office _____					
Action Category (destroy, review, permanent) _____		For records centre Use			
Box No.	Title/Description of Records	Ref. Nos.	Covering Dates	Action Date	Records Centre Loc. No.

**X. Records Centre location register**

<b>Records Centre Location Register</b>							
Location	Code	Consignment	Box No	Location	Code	Consignment	Box No

**XI. Records Centre accessions register**

<b>Records Centre Accessions Register</b>								
Date Received	Name/Address Depositing Office	Records Office Code Number	Consignment Number	Number of Boxes	Location Numbers Used	Action Category (add date when completed)		Comments