



Finance Committee

Distr.: General
22 May 2019

Original: English

Twenty-fifth session

Kingston, 1–26 July 2019

Item 7 of the provisional agenda*

Review of conference services costs and implementation of other cost-saving measures

Review of conference services costs and implementation of other cost-saving measures

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. During the twenty-fourth session, the Finance Committee expressed its appreciation for the efforts being made to effect savings with respect to the costs of conference services, commended the Secretary-General on his efforts and achievements in adopting significant cost-saving measures, in particular those aimed at reducing the costs of conference services, and encouraged him to further pursue such efforts. The present report provides an update on those efforts.

2. The table shows the main cost components for conference services for the period from 2015 to 2018. As described in document [ISBA/24/FC/8](#), savings in the amount of \$220,000 were achieved in 2017 through various measures. It is important, however, to distinguish between cost reductions and cost variations; for example, costs may be higher in a budget year because more meetings are being held or when there are several applications for approval of plans of work.

Overview of conference service costs, 2015–2018

(United States dollars)

<i>Designation</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>
Miscellaneous conference services	124 466	115 908	108 458	256 772
Rentals	77 891	79 471	51 231	139 158
Meeting services, including interpretation	1 109 191	1 045 364	718 644	913 095
Documentation	801 366	818 360	473 203	491 529
Total	2 112 914	2 059 102	1 351 537	1 800 554
Revenue from application fees	(224 959)	(593 202)	(31 204)	–
Net cost	1 887 955	1 465 900	1 320 333	1 800 554

* [ISBA/25/FC/L.1](#).



3. The use of remote simultaneous interpretation services has had a dual impact on the costs of conference services:

(a) The services provided by the company Interprefy are less expensive than those provided by the United Nations;

(b) The Authority does not have to cover the costs of travel or the daily subsistence allowance for interpreters from Interprefy. The travel costs of United Nations interpreters cost the Authority \$277,291 in 2017 and \$157,266 in 2018.

4. Using Interprefy resulted in savings of \$56,130 in 2018 compared with the average of the four previous years, even though two more weeks of meetings were held during the twenty-fourth session.

II. Other cost-saving measures

5. As approved in the budget for the financial period 2017/18, the Authority replaced all fluorescent lighting with light-emitting diodes in January 2018, at a cost of \$22,457. All electricity consumption for lighting during 2018 was attributed to the new lighting system. Electricity costs in 2018 amounted to \$16,652, down from \$24,595 in 2017. This represents savings of \$7,943. The investment will pay for itself in about three years.

6. Another measure that the secretariat intends to explore is to change the way in which it purchases air tickets. There is no real competition among travel agents in Jamaica, and tickets purchased through those agents are often far more expensive than those purchased online or from vendors at a major hub. The secretariat has contracted with a ticketing auditor, who will monitor the fares billed to the Authority by the local travel agent. This measure serves as an incentive to the agent to maintain competitive prices and as a warning to the Authority when the agent systematically offers more expensive routes or airlines.

7. The Authority has also changed the local transport services offered to delegates. Before 2018, local transportation was organized through its drivers and minibus of the Authority. In 2017, the arrangement cost the Authority \$31,966 in overtime and \$2,652 in outsourced transportation, compared with \$19,302 and \$5,398, respectively, in 2018. The net savings amount to \$9,918.

8. The Finance Committee is invited to take note of the present report.
