

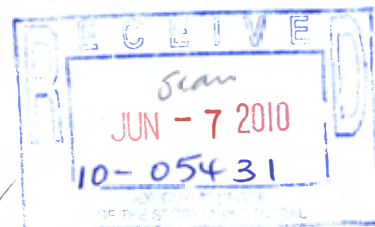
OCHA

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Note to the Secretary-General

Access to Security Council Consultations

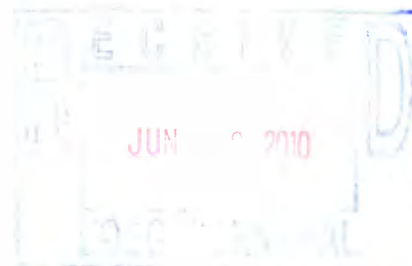


1. During last Monday's Security Council closed session on Gaza, OCHA staff were excluded from attending the deliberations, despite the obvious humanitarian interest in the proceedings. I understand that at the request of the Security Council Presidency, because of the sensitive nature of the topic under discussion and the need for full confidentiality, all UN representatives, except those from the Department of Political Affairs, were asked to leave the room.
2. This was not an isolated incident. As you know, in recent months, attendance of UN Secretariat staff to closed sessions of the Security Council has been restricted. I have written to the Chef de Cabinet before to express my concern about this change in Security Council practice (I attach my note to Mr. Nambiar of 20 April 2010).
3. I would like to re-iterate my concern. OCHA staff have long attended closed Security Council sessions, as a regular part of their responsibilities, as many of the discussions of the Security Council have a bearing on humanitarian affairs. Limiting attendance to staff of the Department of Political Affairs only, or in some cases presumably DPKO, hampers OCHA's ability to assess real or potential humanitarian consequences, to advise me (and you), and coordinate a response.
4. Perhaps I am stating the obvious, but it seems at times that the Security Council Presidency and perhaps others do not fully appreciate that OCHA is an integral part of the UN Secretariat and that by denying access to OCHA, they directly hamper OCHA in its ability to carry out its mandate and its ability to keep you, the Secretary-General, fully informed on humanitarian developments.
5. I would also like to re-iterate that OCHA staff have always been mindful of the sensitivity of the deliberations that go on behind closed doors and have shown full respect for the need for confidentiality. In that light, a fear of a breach of confidentiality cannot be a reason to ask OCHA staff to leave a closed session.
6. I would be grateful if further efforts could be made to convey to the Security Council Presidency, for example through the UN Security Council's Secretariat, OCHA's concerns and underline OCHA's role and added value in attending closed sessions of the Security Council.

John G. Holmes

John Holmes
4 June 2010

cc: Mr. Le Roy
Mr. Pascoe
Mr. Heitmann



Note to Mr. Nambiar

Security Council Meetings / Consultations

1. Because access of UN Secretariat staff to closed sessions of the Security Council has been restricted since the beginning of April, OCHA staff were recently not permitted to attend closed sessions on Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Kyrgyzstan.
2. I am concerned about this sudden change in Security Council practice. OCHA routinely attends Security Council discussions, and does not abuse the privilege, either in terms of numbers or confidentiality. Decisions and discussions relating to international peace and security usually have an important humanitarian dimension and impact the humanitarian sphere. OCHA has a major and genuine interest in following many of the country-specific developments that are under discussion in the Security Council. Not being able to learn first hand about developments and decisions relating to peace and security hampers OCHA's ability to assess the real or potential humanitarian consequences and effectively plan and coordinate a response.
3. I know that this is part of a wider issue and that it is the Security Council and its Presidency who are controlling the decisions. But I would ask you and other relevant colleagues to convey these concerns to the Security Council Presidency and ask for a reversal of the current arrangements at the earliest possible opportunity.

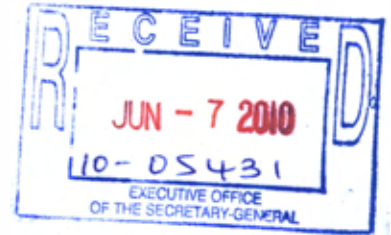


John Holmes
20 April 2010

cc: Mr. A. Le Roy
Mr. B. Pascoe
Mr. H. Heitmann

Note to Mr. Nambiar

Access to Security Council Consultations



Please find attached a note to the Secretary-General on access to Security Council consultations.

I would be grateful if you could kindly submit this to the Secretary-General.

John G. Holmes

John Holmes
4 June 2010