United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa

Records Management Procedures Manual

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Table of Contents

SECTION ONE

The Context of ECA ARM Procedures Manual

1.0 Introduction

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 their eventual disposition. Documentary evidence provides the framework for accountability and transparent which is the cornerstone for efficient and effective implementation of substantive and normative activities.

United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), which has embarked on the restructuring of its work programme to better reflect a "changing world, a new phase of globalization" and the present realities of rapid urbanization in Africa, seeks to improve the management of archives and records throughout the Commission. Archives and records management is therefore, becoming an important instrument of management change process upon which principles and practices of this modern management depends. The success depends on the extent to which knowledge products and records are created/captured, organized, stored, accessed and retrieved throughout their life cycle.

1.1 Scope and Purpose of the Manual

This manual has been developed to help ECA staff understand the records management principles applicable to the knowledge products they create and receive, and help them to manage the information in a secure and efficient manner. It provides clear instructions and resources to manage the recordkeeping function at all stages of the Commission's operations. It aims to make sure that the policies and principles of records management are clear to all staff and that there is 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. The manual is intended to all staff, Records Coordinators and Information Management Assistants, Consultants and Interns.

1.2 Policies and Guidelines Governing ECA Archives and Records Management

ECA archives and records management function is governed by the following polices and regulations:-

- ECA Archives and Records Management policy
- ECA records retention policies
- ECA File Classification Scheme (FCS)

- ST/SGB/2007/5 - Record-keeping and the Management of United Nations Archives
- ST/SGB/2007/6 - Information Sensitivity, Classification and Handling
- ST/SGB/200415 – Use of Information and Communication Technology Resource and Data

1.3 Staff Responsibilities

ECA Divisions, Sections and Units are required to carry out their business in an accountable, transparent and efficient manner. Good recordkeeping is an essential requirement for efficient administration and accountability. It is the basis for establishing and maintaining documentary evidence of the Commission's activities and help to manage and preserve the corporate memory for short and long-term purposes. All ECA staff has 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 ECA's work, to provide evidence and a body of historical records.

ECA's staff responsibilities in the management of archives and records is stipulated in the ECA Archives and Records Management Policy which adopted and customized such responsibilities from the Secretary-General's Bulletin on Recordkeeping and the Management of United Nations Archives (United Nations Archives and Records Management – ST/SGB/2007/5) sets out UN policy and responsibilities with respect to records management.

There are several functional groups of staff with core responsibility for recordkeeping as follows:-

1.3.1 Management Responsibilities

The director of the Division of Administration has responsibility to provide resources necessary to establish recordkeeping systems that are compliant with United Nations requirements, and to:-

- Review and subsequently approve records management policy, procedures, and file plan, etc;
- Recruit qualified information management personnel;
- Support the development of a compliant electronic records management system;
- Co-ordinate between the information management, information technology, facilities, and other staff;
- Approve resources for staff training and development in all recordkeeping competencies;
- Approve resources for technology, space, supplies and services necessary to maintain the records management programme in secure and compliant conditions;
- Monitor and evaluate the records management programme;

1.3.2 Directors/Managers of divisions, sections and SROs

Chiefs of sections/units, directors of divisions and SROs shall ensure that this policy and its associated requirements are implemented within business areas they supervise. Other duties include:-

- Designating records management coordinators responsible 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;
- Ensuring that all staff members in their business areas comply with the policy in terms of the creation, maintenance and use of official records and working together with the records management coordinators to implement this policy;
- Facilitating the implementation of this policy by authorizing various aspects of their section's records management, such as requests to transfer records for storage and requests to access classified records and endorsing records disposition plans.

1.3.3 Responsibilities of Information Management Staff

The Information Management Officer is responsible for developing a Commission-wide records management programme, for ensuring the program is implemented and for establishing procedures and practices to test compliance with the program and liaise closely with ARMS and UN headquarters to fulfill records management requirements. Other responsibilities are:

- Establishing appropriate policies and/or procedures to be applied to all Commission records regardless of the media or location;
- Establishing suitable conditions for the maintenance of records;
- Implementing ST/SGB/2007/6 Information Sensitivity, Classification and Handling, to identify, classify, handle and manage sensitive records to prevent unauthorized access and disclosure;
- Reviewing, classifying, and establishing records retention and disposal schedules for Commission records;
- Provide education and awareness to Commission staff regarding Records Management Program;
- Coordinating the implementation of the Commission's File Classification Scheme (FCS) for business records across all Sub regions offices, division, sections and units;
- Managed the implementation of the Retention Schedule for business records across all Commission business units;
- Coordinate and spearhead programme efforts and evaluate programme effectiveness by conducting periodic surveys of information systems to ensure compliance with the policy;
- Designing and implementing strategies and systems to manage electronic records;
- Coordinate the transfer of records from sections and divisions registries to the ECA storage facility for further processing and assist staff with retrieval services for those records;
- Conduct clearance, in collaboration with Human Resources Services Section (HRSS), to ensure that all records are handed over when a staff member leaves the Commission;

- Participate in UN disaster recovery and business continuity planning by developing strategies to develop procedures to identify and manage vital records and provide means for recovery of records in the event of disaster;

1.3.4 Responsibilities of Records Management Coordinators

Records Management Coordinators will have particular responsibilities for managing records and files in their office. They will be the point of contact for their office with the Information Management Officer. Records Management Coordinators will work with the Information Management Officer to:

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

1.3.5 Responsibilities of ECA Staff

All staff must understand their obligation regarding management and protection of Commission's information and records and must comply with records management program policies and procedures. They must:-

- properly create/receive and captured records and file them in accordance with the established procedures and comply strictly with the office practice requirements specified in the Archives and Records Management Procedures Manual and other related documents;
- Maintain records in an organized manner so that they can be found when needed;
- Not alter, destroy, misplace or render useless any official document, record or file intended to be kept as a record of the Commission.;
- Not destroy records that are transitory in accordance with the retention policy guidelines that have been approved by the Director of the Division of Administration.
- Not remove any records from the ECA premises when separating from the Commission; records are to be retained within their work unit for future business use, unless disposal is authorized in an approved retention schedule. A staff member is entitled to have a reasonable number of unrestricted documents copied at his/her expense and to retain his/her private;

- Be accountable to their supervisors for compliance with ARM policy and other related policies, standards and guidelines;
- Staff are further reminded that all records, including electronic documents and e-mails, created or received by them in connection with or as a result of their official work, are the property of ECA and must be managed accordingly.

1.3.6 Functions and Responsibilities of a Records Offices (registries)

The essential functions of a records office (registries) are to:

- receive, record and distribute incoming and internally created mail of all kinds (such as letters, memoranda and faxes)
- open and index files, attach relevant papers and pass the files to action staff
- build up and control all officially registered files and other documentation in their care, so that they can be produced quickly by means of effective indexing, classification and tracking procedures
- know the location of all officially registered files in their care and be able to produce them quickly, by means of effective indexing, classification and tracking procedures
- provide storage, repository and reference services for all officially registered files and other documentation in their care
- record and arrange for the efficient and timely dispatch of all correspondence produced by the staff they serve
- review and transfer of all outdated files or other records in accordance with retention periods to the records center.

1.4 Documents Relating to this Section

- ARMS Standard on Recordkeeping Metadata (ARMS)
- Recordkeeping and the Management of United Nations Archives (ST/SGB/2007/5)
- Information Sensitivity, Classification and Handling (ST/SGB/2007/6)
- Sample Vacancy Announcements annexed for:-
    - ✓ Information Management Officer (P3),
    - ✓ Information Management Assistants (G6), (G5), (G4)
    - ✓ Records Coordinators

1.5 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is an Information Management Officer?

Information Management Staff are staff appointed by the UN secretariat office or mission whose role is to take primary responsibility for managing records to UN standards so that UN business needs are met. The Information Management Officer may have one or more Information Management Assistants to assist him/her. They work closely with the ARMS, which can provide training and consultancy support.

What are Private Papers?

Private or personal papers are those papers belonging to UN staff which have no connection with official work of the United Nations but which have been kept in their office. For example the proceedings of a professional body, a résumé or a Christmas card list.

SECTION TWO

An Overview of Records Management at ECA

2.0 Introduction

Records and information are important assets of the ECA supporting its work reinforcement, documenting decision-making and providing evidence and accountability. It contributes to high quality research and inputs on member state relations as well as to accountability and transparency of substantive and normative activities and decisions processes, with direct impact on the operational and financial effectiveness in line with her mandate. Without access to records, the Commission would be unable to function. Effective recordkeeping meets the dual challenge of maintaining and accessing records that are necessary for operations, and disposing of records and duplicates that are not needed any more.

The management of the Commission's current records either printed, electronic, audio-visual or posted on the web, produced by staff performing their functions is a key asset of the Commission and a major element of knowledge management as ensuring historical and institutional memory. Proper management of these records will also lead to better handover in successions and save time and money through avoiding repetition of similar and duplicating attempts or mistakes in activities of any office of the Commission. All ECA staff, therefore, has a role to play in recordkeeping.

2.1 Records Management Concepts

2.1.1 What is record Management?

ISO15489-1:2001 states that 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 the processes for capturing and maintaining evidence of and information about business activities and transactions in the form of records".

2.1.2 What is a Recordkeeping System?

A recordkeeping 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 in. Implementing a recordkeeping system in a modern way organization 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.

Recordkeeping systems in the ECA have three main elements:

- Systems and procedures for creating and capturing records
- Systems for classifying and filing procedures
- Retention schedules and retention action procedures

2.1.3 What is a record?

The definition of a record is provided in the International Standard on Records Management (ISO 15489), it explains records are:

> *"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"*

However, ST/SGB/2007/5 defines a record (official) as:

> *"any data or information, regardless of form or medium, maintained by the United Nations as evidence of a transaction"*

In the context of ECA this means a record is the information which is produced to support and facilitate ECA business activities and which are kept as evidence of that activity. Records may come in many forms, paper, microfilm, digital, documents, maps, or photographs. In order to adequately support the business they relate to, records must: - be made, be accurate, be authentic, have integrity, and be useable.

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

- **Content –** which is the information contained in the structure of the record conveying the evidence of the transaction.
- **Context –** which 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.
- **Structure –** which refers to the format of the record and any links to attachments or other related documents. It is the relationship between the component parts of the record, e.g. in an email the information is structured in an accepted order - the From, To, Subject, signature details, email disclaimer - that enables you to understand the message and the relationships between these different elements.

2.1.4 Characteristics of a record

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

- **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;

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

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

- **Usability** (the ability to locate, retrieve, and present the record). Records must be preserved, some for very short time and some permanently).

Together these characteristics distinguish records from other forms of recorded information.

2.1.5 Records, Information and Non Records

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

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

b) Published information

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

c) Non-record non-published information

This covers 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 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.

2.1.6 What to file?

- Records made or received in connection with the initiation, conduct, or completion of business activity;
- Records involving financial or legal matters;
- Records that support the decision making process;
- Records having policy, program or procedure implications;

- Records accounting for, or providing a record of why and how a business was delivered and operations carried out;
- Records requiring a signature such as contracts, MOU etc. must be filed in hard copy although an additional copy may be scanned and filed electronically if required.
- What not to file?
- Books, reference materials, advertisements, newspapers, etc.;
- Documents normally kept at the Library of the Commission such as official World Bank documents, etc.;
- Multiple copies of the same documents;
- Transitory documents" 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 etc.

2.1.7 Why is records management important?

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 are captured, managed and preserved in an organized system which maintains their integrity and authenticity.

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

- Comply with UN records and achieves management requirements as well as recommendations by several internal and external auditors that requested actions to improve records management situation at the Commission;
- Facilitate organization of information and records for easy retrieval when needed;
- Protect records that are essential to Commission's critical business operations;
- Reduce labor requirements for the creation, organization, retrieval and dissemination of recorded information;
- Minimize storage requirements (space, equipment, and supplies) for a given quantity of records;
- Reduce the time and effort required to reconstruct vital information in the event of disaster, theft, and other losses.
- Be prepared for the UN office automation projects which make it mandatory to bring the paperbased filing systems in acceptable order so that a lifecycle approach to the management of information can be implemented;

2.1.8 ECA Records Life Cycle

A basic concept in Records Management is the records life cycle. The ECA records goes through a life cycle of phases starting from when it is created or received by the Commission, through to its use, maintenance and temporary storage before finally being destroyed or archived permanently.

- **Creation/Capture:** The first phase of the Records Life Cycle involves records being created, captured, collected or received through the daily transactions of the business units and can include printed reports, emails or even phone messages, documents that detail the functions, policies, decisions or procedures of the Commission.

- **Maintenance and Use:** The next phase of the life cycle is the maintenance and use of the record. This can include filing, retrieving, use, duplication, printing, dissemination, release or exchange of the information in the record.
- **Disposition:** At the disposition phase records are assessed to determine their retention value using the Commission's Records Retention and Disposal Schedules. This leads to either the preservation or destruction of the record.
- **Preservation:** When a record has been determined to be of permanent value to the Commission and/or to UN in general is then transferred to Commission's archival facility for permanent archiving, preservation and use.
- **Temporary Storage and Destruction:** If a record still has ongoing value to the Commission it will be temporarily stored in the Records Center and when the retention date of these records is reached, permission will be sought from the office of record for their destruction.

2.1.9 ECA Records Management Unit.

ECA' records management unit (RMU) was established to design and administer a records management service in accordance with UN best practice and standards. The unit comprised of a records center and archival facility whose responsibilities are to:

- Ensure that ECA complies with the requirements of legislation on records management, as set out in the Secretary General's Bulletins ST/SGB/2007/5 of 12 February 2007, by establishing archives and records management program, including development of policies, standards, and procedures that will guide management of the Commission's records and archives in terms of their use, storage, retention and disposition, as well as access rights;
- Set up, in collaboration with the Information Technology Services Section (ITSS), an electronic records management system, including policies and standards to ensure that electronic documents and e-mails are accurately created, captured, managed, preserved without alteration and kept accessible for as long as they are needed, in line with the requirements of the United Nations reform agenda;
- Provide guidance, advice and training to the management, records management coordinators and staff members to all aspects of records and archives management and maintain quality control of all records in ECA irrespective of format;
- Establish practices and develop procedures to facilitate the appropriate identification, classification, handling and management of sensitive records to prevent unauthorized use and/or disclosure of sensitive information and to control authorized disclosure of the Commission's sensitive information in accordance with the Secretary-General's Bulletin ST/SGB/2007/6 on information sensitivity, classification and handling;

- Coordinate and spearhead programme efforts and evaluate programme effectiveness by conducting periodic surveys of information systems to ensure compliance with the policy;
- Establish records center/archives to house records that need to be retained beyond immediate operational needs, in a cost-effective manner, ensuring that they can be retrieved quickly when necessary. Archive records of permanent value to the organization;
- Determine, in consultation with the originating office and based on the appraisal system, which records have sufficient historical or other value to warrant their continued preservation as archives of ECA;
- Coordinate the transfer of records from sections and divisions registries to the ECA storage facility for further processing and assist staff with retrieval services for those records;
- Process and describe the records received at the records centre from registries;
- Provide records reference services for offices requesting access to their semi-active records in the records centre;
- Conduct clearance, in collaboration with Human Resources Services Section (HRSS), to ensure that all records are handed over when a staff member leaves the Commission;
- Develop and implement a digitization strategy for archival materials if warranted;
- Dispose of non-current records that have no further administrative, fiscal, legal, historical or informational value after authorization by the offices concerned;
- Contribute to ECA-wide business continuity and disaster preparedness planning to ensure that vital records are safeguarded.

2.1.10 Divisions, Sections SROs and IDEP Registries

The essential functions of divisions, sections, and SROs central registries are to:

- Receive, records and distribute incoming and internally created mail of all kinds (e.g. letters, memoranda, faxes), to attach relevant reference papers and pass the correspondence to staff;
- Open, index, build up & control the files upon which users depend for information about the conduct of the Commission’s business;
- Know the location of all officially registered files in their care and be able to produce them quickly, by means of effective indexing, classification and tracing procedures;
- Provide storage, repository and reference services for all officially registered files and other documentation in their care;
- Record and arrange for the efficient and timely dispatch of all correspondences produced by they staff they serve;
- Review and transfer semi-current records to ECA records center

2.1.11 Contacting the Records Management Unit.

The Records Management Unit comprises a team of Information Management Officer and Information management Assistants who provide records and archives management assistants. In each division and section, they are records management coordinators to provide records management advice.

SECTION THREE
Management of Active Paper Records

3.0 Introduction

Although many of the files we currently create may be electronic, we will always have to cope with paper files. This section describes procedures for managing and maintaining active paper records. The section focuses mainly on the policy, operational and administrative files created by the Commission, commonly called 'subject' files. These documents the policies, functions and procedures of the Commission as well as matters relating to housekeeping such as buildings, equipment and supplies and internal administration. Three special categories of records – financial, personnel and medical – are dealt with in separate sections.

3.1 Records Creation

The scope of ECA records management program begins with the first life-cycle phase after creation – the active records management.

3.1.1 When are records created?

Records are created when there is need for evidence and information – the need to remember the details of an event, decision or action taken such that anyone needing recourse to the facts, whether or not were part of the original matter can rely on and knowledge that the representation is accurate. When carrying out an action or making a decision it is important to create accurate record of it. Some records which affect the 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 the ECA.

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

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

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

3.1.2 How records are created?

There are different ways records can be created including:

- handwriting notes
- completing forms or templates
- creating and transmitting an email
- creating a memorandum or note for file
- creating word processed documents
- taking photographs (taken either digitally or traditionally)
- making video tapes, DVD and traditional film recordings
- making audio tapes, CD and other audio recordings from video conferences, Skype etc.
- entering data into a database

There are also different ways to capture records - the process of incorporating a record within the Commissions' records system – which include:

- physically placing records in a correct part of office's file classification scheme for Paper-based records and
- Saving records into the appropriate file folders within TRIM for Electronic based records.

3.1.3 Some business activities that should be documented

a) Meetings

Meetings may be formal or informal. In either case, significant decisions made in these 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.

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.

b) Telephone conversations:

Telephone conversation which includes providing advice or information, giving consent or permission, dealing with complaints, and making decisions and commitments should be documented in notes for filing or if the conversation is contentious or significant and is likely to have a significant impact on the Commissions' resources or its staff then the conversations should be taped.

c) Decisions, discussions and recommendations:

Where appropriate, records should be made and captured into the records system of informal discussions or face to face contacts where firm commitments to undertake a particular activity have been made or advice has been given.

d) Sending and receiving correspondences:

Records of correspondences sent and received by email, fax or post letters for routine business undertaking should be captured into records systems. Failure to capture these records can place the Commission at risk, as evidence and information will not be available for many important transactions.

3.2 Records Maintenance and Use

3.2.1 ECA File Classification Scheme

The systematic management of ECA records is underpinned by the File Classification Scheme (FCS). The FCS is a key management tool which helps users of the records management system to identify the appropriate file in which to house particular records, the place of that file in relation to other files and the records management system as a whole.

The ECA FCS has three (3) levels of coding system for most of the functions and four (4) levels coding for few unique functions. The first level represents the high-level business functions of the Commission, next comes activities that are carried out in the context of the high level functions, finally at the third level we can find the transactions or the types of records (record series) that are generated as part of the activities.

The filing codes begin with a three alphabetical letter designators which represents the business functions followed by two unique numbers assigned to identify the function. The alphabetical letters are abbreviated from the business function names. Lower level functions under the broader high level functions are assigned specific numbers to capture records and information resulting from such functions.

3.2.2 File Covers

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. Official file should have three components:

- a cover to protect the contents and act as a title page and a record of the file's circulation
- the contents
- Some method of securing the whole together.

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 so as to minimize damage of records from handling and use. The covers are color coded for easy recognition.

	File type	Color
1	Unclassified Files	Khaki
2	Confidential or strictly confidential Files	Blue
3	Personnel (staff) files	Blue

The file cover should be pre-printed with the logo and name of the Commission. 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). 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 are provided by RMU at point of creation. *(Annex 1: example of file cover)*

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

3.2.3 Managing Incoming Correspondences

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

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 a register book and then stored in a safe place and cross-referenced on the file.

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** ***Book (****see AnnexII)*

3.2.4 Managing Outgoing Correspondences

Every letter leaving the Commission should be dispatched through records office of respective division, sections or Sub Regional Offices. The letters must quote the full address and reference number (file reference and folio number) as well as the reference(s) of any other correspondence quoted in the text of the letter. 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. Records office staff are responsible for maintaining a record of what is dispatched through the **Outward Correspondence Register** *(see Annex III).* Letters to be delivered by hand are recorded in the **Team Assistants Dispatch Book** (*see Annex .IV)*

3.2.5 Handling Sensitive Information

Rules for handling 'confidential' and 'personal' letters should always be followed as stipulated in the ST/SGB/2007/6. All other mail should be opened and date-stamped as soon as it is received by the records office. During this process letters should be kept in a box file or other suitable container. The circulation of classified records should be strictly limited to those staff who need them for the efficient performance of their duties. Classified papers should bear their grading on the top and bottom of each sheet ("confidential", "strictly confidential" or unclassified"). Other issues that need to be considered are the following:

a) All classified information must be transported in sealed envelopes or containers, and clearly marked as such;
b) All outgoing and incoming classified information must be recorded in a special registry that lists the staff members who are authorized to handle such information;

c) Classified materials may be duplicated only with the authorization of either their originator or the head of the receiving or originating department or office, and such copies must be entered in the special registry;

d) All classified information must be filed and stored under lock and key in a secure location within the department or office concerned, accessible only to the authorized staff members;

e) A hard copy of classified information received in an electronic form must be printed when received, and filed and stored as detailed in subparagraph (d) above. The electronic file must be securely stored in TRIM which has controls that both prevent access by unauthorized persons, and ensures the integrity of the information.

f) Electronic transmission of classified information shall be performed only through the use of protected means of communication.

3.2.6 Opening New Files

When a document comes into the records office, the Information Management Staff or Records Coordinators must decide whether an appropriate file already exists. If no appropriate file exists, create a new file and allocate a reference and a title. The reference and the title must come from the file classification scheme in order to be valid. In the TRIM, folders for known functions are opened in advance. It is necessary to cross check with the existing folders in TRIM when opening the new file for paper records. If there is no corresponding folder with file number in TRIM with the new file being opened, a new matching folder in TRIM should be opened to enable capturing of emails and electronic records for the new function.

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

The Records Management Unit, 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 form "**RM1 New File"** and send to the Records Management Unit electronically.*(This function will be done with Records Coordinators where Sections and Divisions will have one)*

3.2.7 Giving Files Titles

The 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's what the files contains. Titles must be as concise and as brief 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.

3.2.8 Assigning File Reference and Sequential Numbers

The first step in assigning a file 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 functional sections within ECA include the following:

Human Resource Services

Staff administration
Staff Development
Staff Selection and Recruitment

Facilities Management

Civil Work Projects
Electrical Work Projects
Mechanical Work Projects
Housekeeping and Maintenance

Budget

Budget Preparations
Budget allotment, Monitoring and Reporting
Posts Management

If, for example, a record for which a file is to be created concerns **Human Resource Services**, its prefix will be **HRS29 -** three digits as derived from the HRS. Where it concerns **Facilities Management**, its prefix would be **FMS25,** and so on.

To complete reference number for a file will comprise a letter code of the series to which the file belongs, the three digit prefix letters (main functions), number of the sub category (sub function) and number of the sub-sub category (sub-sub function) preceded by "0" For instance, a file to be used by Human Resources Management dealing with Staff Mobility will have the reference number **HRS29-01-02** where:

HRS29 - Human Resource Management
01 - Staff Administration
02 - Staff Mobility

The last elements of the file reference are sequential numbers which are expandable depending on evidences to be documented for specific sub-sub functions. For instance, Correspondences related to NOF Landscaping and Internal Roads under Civil Works which is part of the Facilities Management function will have the reference number **FMS25-02- 11- 01** where:

FMS25 - Facilities Management
02 - Civil Works
11 - NOF Landscaping & Internal Roads
01 - Correspondences

Important Note:

- Reference number for correspondences for specific functions is derived from the file numbers. In this case for example, correspondences regarding **Space Management** will be filed under **FMS25-07-01** where: **FMS25** is Facilities Management; **07-** Space Management; **01 –** Correspondences. Each individual correspondence under this folder will be assigned automatic running number by recordkeeping system (HP Records Manager).

- Reference numbers for correspondences indicates where the correspondence should be filed or traced. It also indicates the number of folios that simplifies the arrangement of records in the files.

- Therefore, staffs are encouraged to liaise with the Records Coordinators in their Sections and Divisions when they need reference numbers to initiate or reply to correspondences. Staffs are further encouraged to have physical files or access to the electronic folder for easy reference when they need to write/reply to correspondences.

3.2.9 Closing Files and Opening New File Parts (for paper records only)

Records offices (registries) are required to close files at regular intervals. Files should be closed as soon as they become **three centimeters (approximately one inch) thick**, or when they inactive for three years old, 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.

The method of closing a file is to stamp the word **'CLOSED'** with 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 upon which this was done. 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. Records Management Unit determines when a new file part should be opened. The file parts are indicated by the use of sequential letters of alphabets, so:

FMS25-07-01	(first part)
FMS25-07-01A	(second part)
FMS25-07-01B	(third part)

Note that the reference number **FMS25-07-01** for the opened new parts cannot be changed as many documents are already 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.

3.2.10 Placing the Records in the Files (for paper records only)

Maintenance of order of 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 papers should be filed in the same order as the transactions of which they form the part. This is not the same as saying that the individual papers are filed in their date order. Place papers within a file in the order in which they are received in the records office for filing. Write folio number on the top write corner of the document and circle the number. If document is more than one page, the whole document, not the individual pages, is given a folio number. Documents exceeding 25 pages (usually annexes, attachments and enclosures) should be filed in the expandable file folders with the same reference number as the file folder in question.

Read the documents you have filed in order to see whether it mentions any previous correspondence. If it does, see 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 Checklist Ask the following questions regularly. • Does the document belong on 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 the 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.

3.2.11 Cross - Referencing

Cross-referencing is the recommended means of documenting the existence of related information located in a different section of the filing system. If a single letter 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 file numbers on which additional copies have been placed. Similarly, note the location of the original on each copy placed on other files. Do no delay urgent mail by this process.

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.

Papers may only be removed from files 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.

3.2.12 Storing Files

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. Storage equipments used in the records office 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.

A filing station consisting of one or more filing cabinets must have enough space around them to allow comfortable open of drawers or doors to retrieve files. 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. File drawers or cupboards should be clearly labeled with details of the file series and the portion of files in the drawer (for example "Personnel Files surnames A to D").

Lateral filing units are appropriate storing equipments for division and sections central registries as they store files laterally and use space more efficiently.

Storage of files in registry offices should follow safety best practice. In particular:

- There should be enough space to access files without difficulty
- Box and lever arch files should be stored standing on shelves, not stacked on floors
- Boxes and files should never overhang shelves
- 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
- 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 doors, exist doors, lifts, stairways or office areas.

3.2.13 Request for Files

Only authorized staffs are allowed to request files from the registries. All requests should be directed to Records Coordinators though phone or by filing **RM2 Request for a file Form** and sent to registry electronically. Records Coordinators will ensure that file movements are fully recoded before the file leaves the Registry. In case of a request of a file that is in use elsewhere, the records Coordinators will locate the file and ask the staff requesting the file for instruction. Moreover, in occasions when the file is required by two users simultaneously, in those circumstances flexibility will be required.

3.2.14 Controlling File Movement

Files are issued to Staff in at least three circumstances:

- A record arrives in the registry, is recorded and filed, and the file is passed to the officer.
- A file is to be **'brought up'** to the officer
- The officer requests the file in person by filing in the file request form or by telephone.

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 though file movement slips, through regular file censuses and through TRIM barcode tracking for accurate record location.

File Movement Book

File Movement Book is used each time a file is issued to a user, for whatever reason and for however short a period. This must be noted by records coordinator in the 'Sent To' and 'Date' boxes. Upon receipt of the file(s), the officer must sign to confirm the receipt. The date when the file is returned to the records office must also be recorded.

File Movement Slips

Files are frequently passed backwards and forwards between staff for short periods as a part of everyday business. Short-term file movements, for example, when officer passes a file to another officer to read a document on the file, need not be recorded in the registry. However, as a general rule, when an officer completes an action on a file and passes the file to another officer, even if only temporarily, the officer should inform the Registry. An officer wishing to pass a file directly to another officer must complete a **FILE MOVEMENT SLIP** *(Annex VIII…)* and send it immediately to the Registry. The records Coordinators should ensure that staff always have an adequate supply of file movement slips. As soon as registry staff receives the file movement slip, the information must be recorded on the transit sheet. Completed file movement slips on specific file can be destroyed after six months.

File Census

It is accepted that sometimes an officer will pass a file to another officer when he/she has finished using it, without the file's transfer being recorded in the registry. 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.

Registry staff must visit every officer in the sections or divisions at regular intervals (once a week is recommended) to list on a file census form all the files held by that officer. The person carrying out the census must sign the bottom of each census form used, and the form is also initialed by the relevant officer. Then check the information on the file census form against 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 office *(Annex IX File Census Form)*

3.2.15 Handling Files Returned to the Records Office

Returning Files to Registry

Staff should return files to the registry as soon as they are done with them. The records coordinators must check to see whether any returned file contains mail to be dispatched. If so, the file copy must be filed immediately, any loose papers having first been firmly attached. The letters for dispatch are then removed, recorded and dealt with as indicated on 3.2.4. The fact that the file has been returned to the registry must be noted on the file movement book.

The coordinators should also check if there instructions for example, if 'bring-up' action (BU) is required. If yes this must be recorded in the bring-up diary *(Annex X Bring up Diary).* If the file is to be passed to another officer, this must be noted on the t file movement book and the file dispatched.

If there are no outstanding instructions for action, the file must be stored immediately. No file, other than those due for 'bring up' the next day will be left out in the registry at the end of the day.

Bring Up Diary

The bring-up system enables an action officer to request the registry to reissue a file on the day that he or she needs it. The system eliminates the need for staff to hold on to files for long periods if they are not working on them and also helps to keep offices uncluttered. File users are encouraged to use this service when action needs to be temporarily suspended.

The system is one of the prime indicators of the efficiency of a registry and of the trust and confidence placed on it by staff. Its successful and efficient use prevents many of the problems encountered by registry staff, such as prolonged retention of files by users and the consequent difficulties in locating files or the need to spend excessive amounts of time carrying out censuses and searches.
The most effective method of maintaining bring-up records is to use a desk diary with a space for each day. File users will indicate the need for, and details of, any 'bring-up' ('BU') by filling "**Bring Up Action Form**" and send it to the registry **(Annex ... Bring Up Action Form)**. Registry staff should record this request in the bring-up diary under the appropriate date.

Registry staff must look in the bring-up diary for the next day's entries, take out each file due for bring-up and mark up in the File Movement Book for the file's dispatch to the relevant officer the next day.

Bring-up records (diary and forms) must be disposed of when they are no further in use, usually after the compilation of annual statistics.

SECTION FOUR
Management of Personnel Records

4.0 Introduction

This section will provide detailed information on the procedures and guidelines to be followed in the management of personnel records. It discusses issues like creation/receipt, opening, filing, security, servicing and storage of personnel records.

The strict confidentiality of personnel records, as they pertain to staff member's employment history and career with the Commission and other selection & appointment related records, makes the management of these records a bit unique to the management of other administrative records.

The procedures detailed in this section are inline with the established United Nations Personnel Records management procedure and are adjusted to meet our specific needs at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA).

4.1 Creation/Receipt of Personnel Records

The Human Resources Services Section creates and receives several personnel related records in its day to day activities. The personnel records can be sub-divided into two major parts; the Official Status Files (OSFs) and the Subject Files.

The OSF is the key personnel record. It is the consolidated repository of records of a staff member's employment history and career with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) in particular and the United Nations (UN) in general.

Subject files are records maintained for the purpose of providing referential value to staff of the Human Resources Services Section on the rules, regulations and guidelines to be followed in their day to day functions in the administration of recruitment, staff entitlement and training & career development related issues.

In order to ensure the integrity, accuracy and protection or security of Official Status Files, the procedures and standards detailed in this section should be strictly adhered to.

4.2 Filing of Personnel Records

4.2.1 Opening New Files

Official Status Files are opened for all newly recruited Regular Staff Members, Consultants, Individual Contractors, Interns, Freelance Interpreters and Translators. In almost all cases, issuance of the first letter of appointment or Personnel Action (PA) initiates the opening of the OSF. There are two types folders used to open OSFs based on the appointment type of the individual.

The two types of file folders are:

- a two-page manila folder and
- a six-section file folder

The **two page manila folder** is used to open files for Temporary staff members, Consultants, Individual Contractors, Freelance Interpreters & Translators and Interns.

The **six-page file folder** is used to open files for Regular staff members. The official status file folders are labeled by the individual's full name, first name preceded by family or surname.

4.2.2 Filing the Records

Records to be placed in the Official Status File must be submitted to the Registry staff only by a Human Resources Officer or a Human Resources Assistant.

All records are checked for initials or some other indications to make sure that the appropriate Human Resources Officer (HRO) or Human Resources Assistant (HRA) has noted the information before placing the record in the Official Status File. If in doubt, the HR registry staff must contact the concerned HRO/HRA before placing the record in the OSF.

All papers for the six-page OSF should be screened and codified according to the page on which it should be filed. Meaning, the name of the staff member the paper concerns is underlined and the official status page number will be written at the bottom left corner of each paper. This will allow the registry clerk to file papers in the right page of the right file. The codification should be performed by the registry assistant who should be able to read and identify the main subject of each correspondence.

The official status page is determined based on the subject of the paper submitted for filing. A detailed list of types of correspondences and forms to be placed on each page of the six-page **Official Status File** is available for reference *(Annex XII).* Records are fastened in the respective section of the file in chronologic order, the latest records being on top.

Certain papers may not be accepted for filing unless they are initialed by the appropriate HRO or HRA. The Registry staff should, therefore, forward to the HRO/HRA concerned any of the papers listed below which do not bear the required initials or verifications:

- Diplomas and out-side training certificate
- birth, marriage, divorce and death certificates
- Reference Checks

E-mail communications that deal with policy decisions and have a records value should be screened and put in the OSF.

Generally, only one copy of all communications is retained in the OSF unless important notations are made on extra copies and necessitate maintenance of duplicate copies due to the different notations they contain.

Removal of records or papers form the OSF in whole or in part requires specific instructions by authorized officials.

4.3 Maintenance and Use

4.3.1 Security of Personnel Files

The HRSS Registry should be housed in a secured room which is kept locked during non-working hours. In order to ensure that official status files are kept secure and accounted for at all times, the following procedures should be strictly observed:

- Given the strict confidentiality of the information contained in official status files, under no circumstances should these files be left unattended on desks or in areas where personnel outside of HRSS have regular access.

- Access to the HRSS Registry room should be restricted and all requests for files should be served through the Registry window and the Registry door should always be kept closed.

- Official status files have to be returned to the Registry by close of business each day. The Registry will be the sole repository for securing files overnight.

- The staff of the HRSS Registry should exercise discretion at all times and shall not reveal the contents of these records except to the authorized officials.

4.3.2 Request for Personnel Files

Requests for personnel files should be submitted in written form (See Annex 6). The requests are then checked to insure that they are signed by authorized officials. Unauthorized written request are returned back to the sender.

Official Status Files may only be issued to authorized personnel who submit signed file request forms. All staff members of HRSS are by definition considered authorized Officials to have access to Official Status Files.

After an OSF has been charged-out, the relevant file request form should be kept in place of the file pending return of the OSF to the Registry. Any borrowed OSF should be returned to the Registry within one week for the purpose of updating.

Certain routine information such as: Entry on Duty (EoD), Date of Birth (DoB) and contract expiry dates, etc. may be given over the telephone or at the Registry window to persons who are definitely known to be authorized to receive such information. If there is any doubt as to whether the requesting official is authorized to receive certain information, the answer should be withheld and the request referred to the appropriate Human Resources Officer.

4.3.3 Special Requests for Personnel Files

Requests for Official Status Files by the Administrative Tribunal, Joint Appeals Board, Joint Disciplinary Committee, etc are considered to be special requests. OSFs are charged-out to the above-mentioned special organs as they are authorized to have access to the OSF. In providing access to the OSF to the above organs; pending materials are fastened to the appropriate section in chronological order; a check is made for miss-filed correspondence; all papers are numbered by section and the file is then forwarded to the appropriate official in the Administrative Tribunal. It should be noted that a skeleton file should be prepared before the OSF is transferred for interim use.

4.3.4 Transfer of personnel files to overseas Offices and agencies of the United Nations

On receipt of a written request from the offices Personnel services or the Department of Technical Assistance for Development, an OSF can be transferred to overseas offices, other organs and agencies of the United Nations.

If the staff member has been transferred to any of the above offices, excluding specialized agencies, a skeleton file containing copies of all the more important records of the staff member is prepared for retention in the HR registry or the ARMU and the original OSF is forwarded to the overseas office. If, however, the staff member has been assigned or seconded, the skeleton file is forwarded to the receiving office and the original OSF is maintained in the registry or ARMU.

If a staff member is transferred to a Specialized Agency, a skeleton file can be forwarded to the agency upon receipt of a special request from the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM).

Files being transferred overseas are forwarded in sealed envelop and marked confidential. When files are going overseas, a pouch number is assigned to the envelop and the same is communicated to the receiving office via email for the purpose of tracking.

4.3.5 Movement controls of Personnel Records

The Movement of Personnel Files is controlled in two ways. One is through a Personnel File Request Form and the other is through maintenance of a computer database on the movement of the files. The file request form contains information on the name of the file, name of the official to whom the file is being lent the date of charge-out.

Whenever a file is charged-out, the corresponding file request form completed by the borrower is kept in place of the file and the information is entered into the computer database. The file request form is destroyed as soon as the respective file is returned back to the HRSS registry.

Authorized officials are required to inform HR registry whenever a file is transferred from one official to another by completing the file transfer form.

4.3.6 Storage of Personnel Records

The Human Resources Services Section provides secure storage for its personnel files. Personnel files should be stored in metal cabinets that are lockable. The filing cabinets should also be kept in locked rooms. It should be noted that records have to be stored in an environment meeting storage requirements of records, like climate, security and facilities.

ARMU provides storage for personnel files that are semi active and inactive records (i.e. records which are no longer in use in HRSS on a day-to-day basis but which still need to be retained). HRSS can retrieve the records which they have transferred to ARMU by completing the file request form and submitting it to ARMU.

SECTION FIVE

Management of Semi-Active Records

5.0 Introduction

This section defines the procedures for identifying, transferring and the management of 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'. The records still retain primary values 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.

- ***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

- ***Semi-current:*** Records: Records required only infrequently in the conduct business. Also known as Semi-active records. Semi-current records will normally be maintained in a record center or other off site intermediate storage pending their ultimate disposal.

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

- ***Records Center:*** a building or part of a building designed or adopted for low-cost storage, maintenance and communication of semi-current records pending their ultimate disposition.

5.1 Decongestion of Records Offices

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

5.1.1 Steps in Implementing Decongestion of Registries

Step 1: Setting Decongestion Criteria

Setting the 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 are developed for the decongestion process of all ECA sections, divisions and SROs registries:

1. To identify and separate those records/files/documents which have not been active for a period of three (3) years.

2. 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.

The Identified records under this criterion shall be processed as records centre materials.

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

1. All files with the last folio bare the year 2010, that is, three years back should be regarded as semi-active records. It means that, there has been no active activity regarding the function for the past three years. Such files should therefore, be removed from the shelves and prepared to be transferred to the records center.

2. If the file is assigned retention schedules **C+3** and the date of the last folio in the file reads 2011, the file should be considered active and should be left on shelves.

Step 2: Marking up of file Storage Locations

Label all the storage equipments (cabinets, etc) available in the registry following the current original order. If records have been arranged vertically for example, your numbering has to follow the same order. The exercise will enable the persons carrying the decongestion process to work comfortably while getting away with the records.

Step 3: Listing files from the shelves

After labeling all the storage facilities, the working space has to be prepared closer to the storage equipment for easy retrieval of files and recording them to special forms. During this process two forms are mainly used namely **Records Transfer Request Form** and **Records Inventory Form**. 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 transfer form because the files/documents recorded have to be transferred to Low Cost Storage area i.e. **Records Centre.**

The **Records Inventory Form** is used to record all files or documents which are identified as active records. As per criteria set, 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 attention of action officers. In this form the divisions and sections from which records are drawn has to be indicated. The location from where the records/file has been obtained has to be shown, file reference number has to be recorded, file title has to be clearly written, the year that file was opened and the latest date of the current folio to be shown.

After recording all required details you have to mark with a pencil on top, right hand side of a file the cabinet/shelves location number e.g. FC.1/10 or WS.2/11. Marking of location number on a files help Record Officers to easily re-shelf the files into the appropriate location.

Step 4: Re-Shelving Active Files

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 if possible file jackets and files can be allocated new file titles if necessary. Titles of the files should be assessed to reflect functions and not the title of the documents files in it.

5.2 Transfer of Records to the Records Center and Archival Facility

5.2.1 Preparing records for transfer

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 as a result of 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 Record Center clearly separating administrative from substantive records.

All records identified as archival materials from Sub Regional Offices and IDEP registries 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.
The standard acid free archive box should be used for packing the files.

During packing files/documents the following should be considered

- Files should be places in boxes vertically with the opening side facing upwards
- Pack records in the same arrangement which they are maintained and created by the offices. Do not create a new filing system.
- Files/documents must be packed firmly in the boxes but not overloaded to enhance easy retrieval and handling
- Limit box contents to one record series.

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

- the series number, assigned by the office of origin (refer the file plan)
- the consignment number, assigned by ECA Records Management Unit

- the box number, assigned by the office of origin.

Records Coordinators will fill in the request for records transfer - **Records Centre Transfer Form**. Each file/document placed in a box has to be recorded in this form with the complete information such as the action category, date, location and the box number, etc. Records Coordinators will arrange with Information Management Officers for the records pick up and transfer to the ECA Record Centre

Identification of the Originating Office

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 transferred any particular records and which office retains continuing responsibility for them.

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

Date of Issue	Name of Record Office	Code Number
20/05/2013	Office of the Director of Administration	100
20/05/2013	Facilities Management	101
15/06/2013	Human Resources Services	102

Code numbers should be allocated serially, at the time when the first transfer of records is requested to be made by that office. 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.

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.

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

Determining the Action Category

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

- 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.

- If the action category is 'DESTROY', this instruction should be entered in the action category space. The correct 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.

- If the action category is 'REVIEW', this instruction should be entered in the action category space. The correct 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.

- 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 archival facility. There must be only one transfer date per box, so take the latest date as the effective one for the whole box.

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.

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 co-ordinate 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 co-ordinate the appropriate action so that it takes place for a large group of records at the same time, saving resources.

5.2.2 Transfer of records to the Records Center

Upon receipt of request to transfer records for an Office, Records Center will send empty and supply Records Center Transfer Form. Once all transfer documentation is approved, Records center will notify the Records Coordinators the pick-up date. When the consignment is received in

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:

Check the records

- Remove the records centre transfer form from the box.
- 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.

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

- 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.

Preparing the Boxes

- 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 *(Annex XVII)*

- 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 to only 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.

- The box numbers should be written on all copies of the records centre transfer list, in the appropriate column.

Distribute the Records Center transfer Form

Three completed copies of the records centre transfer list should be distributed as follows:

- 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.

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

- 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 their use. Offices will consult this form to find out the box number of any record they require. On receipt of this copy the record office should destroy the fourth copy they kept at the time of the transfer.

Label the boxes

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

- originating office code number
- box number
- location code.

102 FMS/320/01 **[(box number (location)]**

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. 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.

Store the records

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.

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.

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.

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.

Update the location register and accessions register.

The location register holds the following information:

- records office code
- consignment number
- box numbers
- location codes.

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.

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.

It is also good to have Statistical records which act as an index of transferring office. The index will show of 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	
Agency:	Records Office Code 100 Office of the Director of Administration Division of Administration

Consignment Nos.	*No. 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	

Summary of Key procedures in transferring records to the Records Centre.

Check number of boxes received
↓
Enter initial information into accessions register
↓
Sort boxes into order
↓
Remove transfer list from box
↓
Check if transfer list is correct
↓
Check if contents are properly prepared
if not, report to the office of record
↓
Consult disposal schedule
↓
Decide action category and date
↓
Check box has same action category and date if not, rebox
↓
Write action category and date on transfer lists
↓
Consult location register

↓
Give boxes next available numbers
↓
Cross off numbers used
↓
Enter information in location register
↓
Write box numbers on transfer lists
↓
Complete information in accessions register
↓
File transfer lists

5.3 Retrieval and Use of Records Held by the Records Centre

Accurate and timely retrieval of records is critical for the operation of a Record Center. Users are advised of the scheduling options provided by Records Center 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.

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.

In general, Records Centre facilities are not available to the public. Public access to documents is provided by the archival facility, subject to UN statutory provisions.

5.3.1 Retrieval of Files/Boxes

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 request the Records center through Records Coordinators of their respective sections/divisions. Requests to borrow records may be made by email, by telephone or in person. The Records Coordinators will then consult Records Center who will retrieve the records. The Records Centre will plan for regular deliveries of requested records to the records offices. But this will depend on the staffing issues which will determine whether such service will be undertaken care by the Records Center or registries of the creating offices.

Records Center should be able to receive requests by telephone or e-electronic form through email. Users can also execute search at their workstation through TRIM, locate the box or file they need, verify that it is available, and request the item.

At the Records Center, the retrieval information need to be transformed to a bar code label/or report. Labels need to be generated and affixed to the box/file and routing envelop.

5.3.2 Reactivating of inactive file

In the course of time, sometime a decongested file might be needed to be reactivated simply because, may be the function represented in that particular file has been rejuvenated or the project has been renewed. This might occur sporadically, if this happens the record office will be required to reactivate the file and bring back to the active files for normal use. During the reactivation process the Record Office is required to re-examine the former title in order to make changes where necessary to suit the current function. The officer will open a new file jacket by copying the current file title and new reference number, then after transfer of all folios to the newly created file. Before filing the received document, cut the front page of former file which comprises the transit ladder and file it as a divider between former documents and the current ones. Record the file in normal control books and delete the file from the inactive file list i.e. in the Record Centre Transfer form. Reactivation of a file can only be done if the file has been requested for several times, or new documents of the same function have been received. It is advised to be careful when reactivating a file and if possible consult users before making this decision.

The records centre staff are responsible for

- providing an efficient retrieval service for office of records that need to consult their transferred records
- facilitating the authorized and timely destruction of records that are no longer needed for on-going business and that lack archival value
- ensuring that records with archival value are transferred to the archival institution
- providing records centre users with advice and help on the use of the facilities.

5.4 Security Measure in the Records Center

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 confidence to clients. To maintain an adequate level of security, the following steps should be taken:

1. Persons other than the records centre staff should not be allowed to enter into the storage area without the specific permission.
2. All external doors must be kept locked (subject to safety regulations). Keys must be numbered and kept locked. Spare keys for use in emergency should be kept in a location noted in the emergency plan.
3. Preventive measures against fire flood and so on should be are always in force.
4. Records should not be issues to anyone other than official representatives of the transferring office.
5. Classified records should be kept in designated areas of the records centre. Records centre staff should activate the machinery for declassifying records wherever possible.
6. Smoking or eating should not be allowed in the records centre

SECTION SIX

Records Appraisal, Archival and Disposition of Records

6.0 Introduction

This section describes steps required for records appraising records disposition and transfer to archival facility. 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 subject for disposition in that year.

6.1 Principles of Appraisal, Retention and Disposal

6.1.1 Records Appraisal

The purpose of appraisal (*which is sometimes referee to as '**evaluation' or 'selection'**),* is to

1. Deciding 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'**.
2. Deciding what records need to be permanently preserved because 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'**.

Appraisal task will 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, 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.

Through appraisal, it 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 are neither disposed of 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 disposed of too late, resources are wasted storing and maintaining unneeded records.

6.1.2 Records Retention

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. It will mean therefore that, records that have been retained for use must remains 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.

6.1.3 Records Disposal

Records disposal is the action taken as a consequence of appraisal decisions. This would include transfer of the records to an archival institution or destruction of the records of no further value by incineration, maceration, pulping, shredding or another secure method.

6.2 Implementing Records Appraisal

Effective appraisal, retention and disposal are dependent on an effective records management programme that controls records throughout their life cycle. Despite having a well-documented retention and disposal schedule, there remains a need for an appropriate method for carrying out the appraisal. The best method for an appraiser can apply is to examine each record series individually. Records series are the basis for control of the records and it serves as the focus of appraisal. Records series are homogeneous, and relates to the functions, activities and business process of the creating office.

Appraisal task should be done in a disciplined manner as the temptation to read the whole record or file is unavoidable. Appraisal is carried to the whole records series as opposed to file by file, item by item.

The value of a record can be established from:

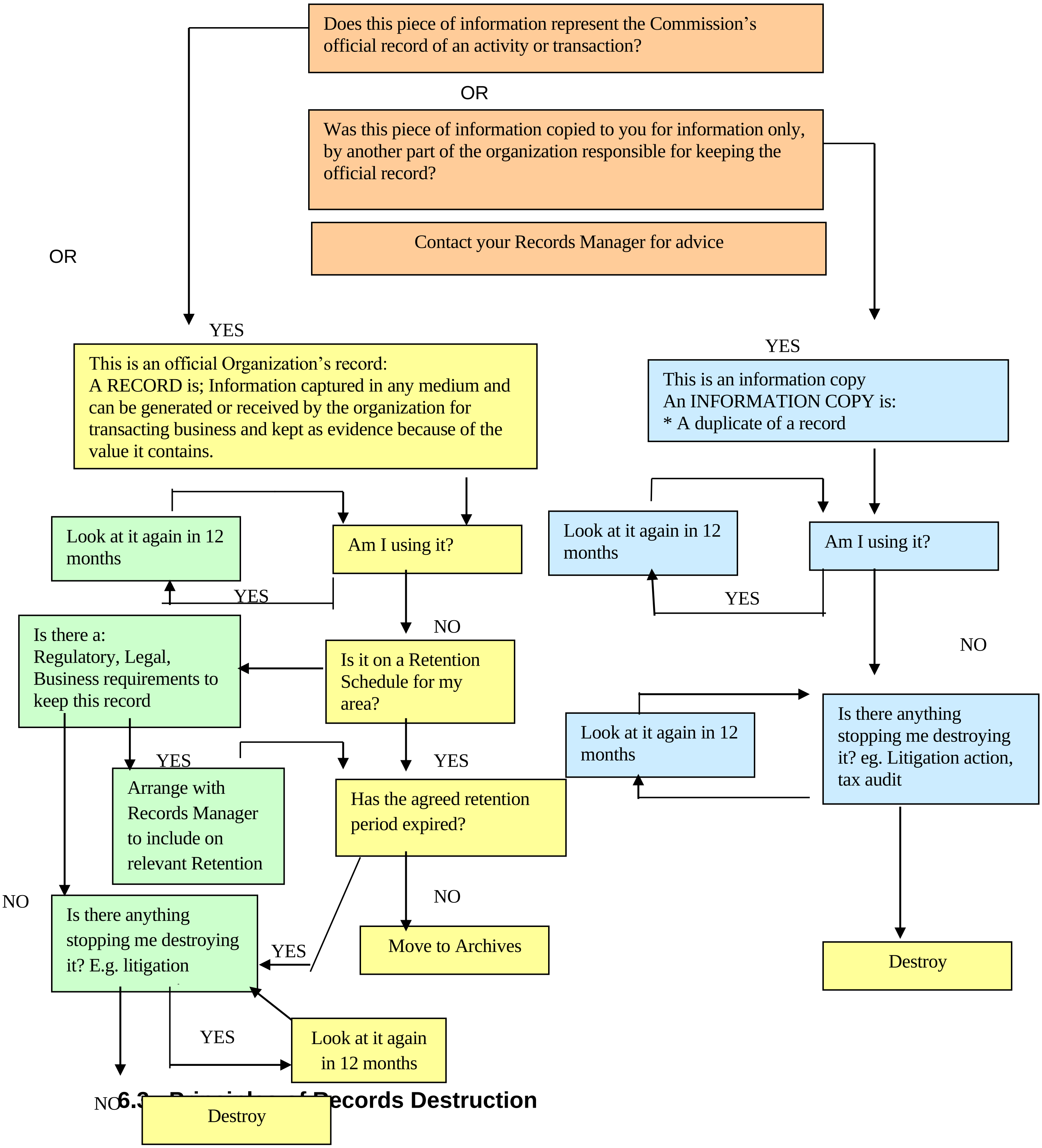
- The description of the record series, or individual record in the case of file title, which usually reflects the contents;

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

- Checking the origin of inward communications as this can be a clue to identify which office section division or agency corresponded to the Commission, in order to determine whether record should be kept for evidential or informational value or can be destroyed as its origin can be obtained from where it was created.

The following chart provides (adopted from http://uspub.glaxo.com/IMGP/captureit/.) a quick scan of determining value of records and assists in making immediate decision as to what, why, how and when the record can be disposed.

QUICK SCAN OF RECORDS APPRAISAL DECISION



6.3 Principles of Records Destruction

ECA used guidelines from UN ARMS in the destruction of records. Destruction of records should be done when the following have been affected:

- Authorized
- Appropriate (irreversible, timely and environmental friendly).
- Secure/Confidential
- Timely
- Documented

6.3.1 Authorized

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.

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 for access request.

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.

6.3.2 Appropriate Method

Destruction of records should follow appropriate methods which are;

Irreversible

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.

Environmentally friendly

Records should be destroyed in an environmentally friendly manner. Both paper and microforms should be recycled where possible.

6.3.3 Secure/Confidential

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.
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.

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 trucks!) 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

6.3.4 Timely

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 disposal at a later date.

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

6.3.5 Documented

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.

Recordkeeping systems and any other documentation should note which retention schedule authorizes the destruction of the records. The specific schedule number for example MRLT 0032, should be documented along with the date of destruction.

You may also wish to keep a destruction register that would link 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.

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

ANNEXES

UNECA	**United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)**	**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

Annex 1: Sample File Cover

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

Annex 2: Incoming Correspondence Register

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

Annex 3: Outgoing Correspondence Register

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

Annex 4: Team Assistant's Dispatch Book

FILE MOVEMENT SLIP Use for long-term file movements (Please complete this form and send it to the records office when you pass a file to another officer. This will enable the records office to ensure that its records are accurate.)
File number:
File title:
Passed to:
Location:
Date:
Signature:

Annex 8: File Movement Slip

File Census Form

DATE:________________

File Ref Number	File Title	Location/Officer

SIGNED _______________________________ INITIALLED __________________________

Annex 9: File Census Form

File Diary

Serial Number	File Number	Date Opened	File Title	Previous File Number

Annex 10: File Diary

HUMAN RESOURCES SERVICES SECTION
FILE REQUEST FORM

DATE: ____________________

FILE NAME: - ____

CHARGED TO: -____

ACTIVE/INACTIVE/CONSULTANT/INTERPRETOR/TRANSLATOR/SUBJECT

AUTHORIZED BY:- ____

FOR HRSS REGISTRY USE ONLY

THE FILE HAS BEEN CHARGED TO: ____________________________

ON____

____
HRSS REGISTRY STAFF SIGNATURE

Annex 12: Official Status File Request Form

Records Centre Transfer Form

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.

Annex 15: Records Centre Transfer Form

Records Centre Accessions Register								
Date Receive d	Name/Address Depositing Office	Records Office Code Number	Consignme nt Number	Number of Boxes	Location Numbers Used	Action Category (add date when completed)		Comments

Annex 16: Records Centre Accessions Register

Records Centre Request Form

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 ________________

Annex __: Records Centre Request Form

Records Centre Location Register							
Location	Code	Consignment	Box No	Location	Code	Consignment	Box No

Annex 17: Records Centre Location Register