

The United Nations emblem, featuring a world map from the North Pole surrounded by olive branches, is centered in the background.

GLOSSARY OF BASIC UNITED NATIONS TERMINOLOGY IN GOVERNANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Prof. Mario P. Chiti

Chairperson of the Working Group on Terminology
Committee of Experts on Public Administration

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1.The origin of the Project

- Fifth CEPA session (April 2006). Decision to establish a Working Group (WG) on basic UN terminology in governance and public administration (Off. Rec. of ECOSOC, 2006, Suppl. no. 24; E/2006/44)

1. The origin of the Project

- WG preliminary report at the sixth CEPA session, April 2007 (doc. E/C.16/2007/4)
- Second preliminary report at the seventh CEPA session, March 2008 (doc. E/C.16.2008/1)

1. The origin of the Project

- Committee's decision to finalise the activity of the WG towards a final Report to be presented at the last session (2009) of this CEPA mandate
- ECOSOC's approval of the development of the work and encouragement for the conclusion before the CEPA mandate expiration in 2009

2. “Compendium” or “Glossary”?

- So far, the two terms have been used indifferently
- It is time to choose a final name of the project. It implies the role and the scope of the document

2. “Compendium” or “Glossary”?

- Compendium means a summary, an abstract, an abridgement; but also a collection of simplified tables/data.
Glossary means a collection/list of terms, a short dictionary of terms related to a specific subject

2. “Compendium” or “Glossary”?

- For the reasons better explained below, our work may be qualified as a “glossary”

3. Reasons of the UN Glossary

- The UN documents make use of terms whose meaning is not of general acceptance, because:
 - a) sometimes generic
 - b) sometimes controversial
 - c) sometimes not known in part of the Member States
 - d) used by the Member States in different ways

3. Reasons of the UN Glossary

- Same situation in other international organizations and in the EU, even if this latter is a supranational organization with peculiar characters

3. Reasons of the UN Glossary

- Need for a consistent and coherent lexicon
- Particularly remarkable for documents on public administration, according to the technicalities of the matter; but also on the more open matter of “governance”
- The UN Glossary may help the growth of common administrative culture, without attempting at the autonomy of each legal order

3. Reasons of the UN Glossary

- To summarize, the glossary will favour:
 - a) consistency in the UN documents, giving clarity to intergovernmental deliberations
 - b) the correct and timely implementation of the UN resolutions by the Member States
 - c) the diffusion of “best principles” around the world

4. Other international efforts for similar documents

- The CEPA project is not the first and not the only one towards international or supranational glossaries or similar acts

4. Other international efforts for similar documents

- Other experiences are carried out by private associations and bodies; ours is public
- Private bodies' products cannot be compared with documents elaborated by public, independent and impartial bodies, as CEPA
- Private initiative are irregular in their times and often overlapping themselves, possibly full of lacunae

4. Other international efforts for similar documents

- The Glossary will remain not binding (a document based on the authority of the Committee)
- The ECOSOC'S approval and/or by other UN institutions may give a peculiar relevance to it

5. Merits of the CEPA initiative

- UN give to the Glossary a global scenario as for the players involved (Member States, NGOs and other subjects), and a general scope
- The Glossary will favour the best implementation of the UN acts by the Member States
- In a legal perspective, the Glossary will contribute to the certainty of law and to its stability
- “Young States” members of UN may benefit of the Glossary for the better understanding of the UN acts and for the development of well based national reforms

6. The first results by the WG and Secretariat

- A web site, specifically devoted to the Glossary, prepared by the Division for Public Administration and Development Management
- About twenty definitions prepared by the WG chairperson and some experts under his tutorage
- Format of the definitions: explanatory drafting, neither concise nor normative

6. The first results by the WG and Secretariat

- Possibility to correct, amend, and also abrogate them when necessary
- List of definitions open to new entries, at any time
- Links amongst the terms

7. Practical problems

- Language. All the definitions will appear in the six UN official languages
- Publication. The Glossary will be available on line, mostly for practical reasons; but it may be useful/necessary at a later stage to have a traditional printed document
- Membership. The present WG members will cease at the end of this CEPA mandate

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8. Issues to be discussed

- The model of definition: explanatory or normative (or both). Consequences for the legal nature of the Glossary (see next point)

8. Issues to be discussed

- The legal nature of the Glossary. An “official” act of the UN, in the sense that it is adopted by a UN body (CEPA) and confirmed in some ways (notation, adoption, appreciation, etc.) by ECOSOC. In this respect quite different from similar documents of private source. But without any binding force

8. Issues to be discussed

- The Glossary may result a “source of inspiration” for the UN Institutions and the Member States, and all the other interested parties (see the interesting experience of the EU Charter on fundamental rights)
- The influence of the Glossary will also depend by the authoritative quality of its definitions (i.e. the quality of the drafters), giving space to a sort of “quality suasion”

Issues to be discussed

- The Glossary and CEPA. The issue here is: has CEPA just started up the project, after that it will become a UND task; or does CEPA consider the Glossary one its permanent interest, in close contact with the Division and the UN offices?

- A legacy for the next CEPA mandate?