



**Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods
and on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification
and Labelling of Chemicals****Sub-Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods****Sixtieth session**

Geneva, 27 June-6 July 2022

Item 14 of the provisional agenda

Other business**Declassification of past documents****Note by the secretariat*****I. Motivation**

1. Currently, the UN holds in its archives copies of documents discussed by the Sub-Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and its predecessor bodies. Besides the paper versions, many of these documents also have digital versions (or have been digitized) and are currently uploaded to the Official Document System (ODS¹). However, for reasons explained below, many of these documents were originally classified as “Restricted” and are therefore not accessible to delegates and the general public unless they ask for special permission. Furthermore, these restricted documents do not even appear in searches in ODS, so people researching old decisions from these bodies may not even be aware of the existence of these documents.

2. Several delegations have already asked the secretariat whether these documents could be made widely available without restriction and the secretariat has initiated discussions with the United Nations Library and the Division of Conference Management to request that these documents be declassified. In order for this request to proceed, the current Sub-Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods must consider the matter and decide whether it wants to declassify these documents.

3. This document aims to inform the Sub-Committee about the nature of these documents and the reasons for their original classification and to ask the Sub-Committee if it wants to request that these documents be declassified.

II. Scope

4. The secretariat has identified the following five sets of documents as candidates for declassification (the names of the originating bodies are given in parentheses):

* A/75/6 (Sect.20), para. 20.51

¹ <https://documents.un.org>

- E/CN.2/CONF.5/R.xxx (Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods)
- ST/SG/AC.10/R.xxx (Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods)
- ST/SG/AC.10/C.1/R.xxx (Group of Experts on Explosives of the Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods)
- ST/SG/AC.10/C.2/R.xxx (Group of Rapporteurs of the Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods)
- ST/SG/AC.10/C.3/R.xxx (Sub-Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods)

5. Appendix 1 in INF.3 contains a list provided by the UN Library with the symbols and dates of all documents from these sets currently uploaded to ODS. This list currently exceeds 1000 items and ranges in dates from the 1950s to the 1990s. The table below provides a summary of the number of documents in ODS by symbol and accessibility status. Note that the table does not include documents for which there is a paper copy in the archives which has not been digitized and uploaded to ODS. For example, the library's online catalogue² lists 54 documents for ST/SG/AC.10/C.1/R.xxx and 147 documents for ST/SG/AC.10/C.2/R.xxx but none of them are in ODS, as they have not been digitized.

<i>Symbol</i>	<i>In public ODS</i>	<i>Restricted in ODS</i>
E/CN.2/CONF.5/R.xxx	7	331
ST/SG/AC.10/R.xxx	5	223
ST/SG/AC.10/C.1/R.xxx	0	0
ST/SG/AC.10/C.2/R.xxx	0	0
ST/SG/AC.10/C.3/R.xxx	5	451
Total	17	1022

III. Samples

6. To aid the Sub-Committee in making an informed decision, appendix 2 of INF.3 contains a list with the titles of those documents present in the library's online catalogue³. Furthermore, appendix 3 of INF.3 contains one sample document of each of the five discussed sets.

IV. Reasons for the original classification of the documents

7. As far as the secretariat has been able to ascertain, in the past, all working documents of these bodies were classified as restricted. However, this was not done for confidentiality reasons, it was mainly for distribution purposes. It did not make sense to send paper copies of this kind of working documents by mail to permanent missions and libraries around the world, and the solution to avoid this was to mark them as restricted. This practice ended once documents were uploaded to ODS instead of being printed and sent.

8. As can be seen in the samples provided in appendix 3 of INF.3, the nature of these documents is the same as current working documents, which are marked for general distribution and publicly available for download at the secretariat's website as well as in ODS. There is no apparent reason to keep access to these documents restricted nowadays.

² <https://digitallibrary.un.org>

³ The library's online catalogue contains documents which have not been digitized and are therefore not in ODS. Conversely, ODS contains some documents which are not present in the library's online catalogue, as it currently contains some gaps. For these reasons, the lists in appendices 1 and 2 of INF.3 do not match.

9. It might be worth noting that article H 5 of the current United Nations Editorial Manual⁴ specifies the following on the matter of classification (emphasis added by the author on relevant parts):

“The decision to place material in the RESTRICTED category shall be taken by the head of the department or office originating the document, or by a senior official designated by him for this purpose. When such a decision is considered, attention should be paid to the fact that the work of the United Nations should be "open" unless circumstances require confidentiality. Thus, the basic approach should be to use the RESTRICTED classification only as an exception. As a rule, should the document contain material provided by a Government or some other source outside the Secretariat on the express condition that it be treated confidentially, such a document and/or its annexes would have to be classified as RESTRICTED. RESTRICTED should not be used to achieve a controlled distribution, that should be done by issuing the material in the LIMITED series and including special distribution instructions on the documents request form.”

10. Furthermore, on the topic of declassification, the editorial manual indicates that “Material initially RESTRICTED should be declassified when the passage of time or other events permit”.

V. Action to be taken by the Sub-Committee

11. If the Sub-Committee wishes to request that these documents are declassified, the secretariat proposes that the following paragraphs be inserted in the report of this session:

“The Sub-Committee requested the secretariat that it takes the necessary steps to declassify the following sets of documents:

- *E/CN.2/CONF.5/R.xxx (Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods)*
- *ST/SG/AC.10/R.xxx (Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods)*
- *ST/SG/AC.10/C.1/R.xxx (Group of Experts on Explosives of the Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods)*
- *ST/SG/AC.10/C.2/R.xxx (Group of Rapporteurs of the Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods)*
- *ST/SG/AC.10/C.3/R.xxx (Sub-Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods)*

The Sub-Committee requested that any documents pertaining to these sets currently in ODS be made available to the public without restriction. Furthermore, if further documents pertaining to these sets which are currently only in paper form are digitized and uploaded to ODS in the future, the Sub-Committee requested that those documents also be made available to the public without restriction.”

⁴ https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/134841/files/United_Nations_Editorial_Manual.pdf, page 493