

## SELLING TO THE UNITED NATIONS PROCUREMENT AGENCIES

*The international procurement market for United Nations agencies is immense, valued at nearly US\$4 billion per year. Yet it offers opportunities about which Canadian suppliers are ill informed. That changed on October 1, 1996 when UN agency representatives conducted a Montreal seminar on **How to Sell to the United Nations**. Summarized here are the procurement activities of some of the agencies, how they operate, and how they may be approached.*

The UN representatives were guests of the seminar organizers, the United Nations Association in Canada (UNAC), a not-for-profit, non-governmental organization based in Ottawa.

**United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR)** — assists refugees in the countries to which they have fled and helps to reestablish them in permanent homes. In 1995, UNHCR procured about US\$150.5 million worth of goods and services.

Shelter products (tarpaulins, tents, prefabricated buildings) are usually the largest items purchased by UNHCR, followed by vehicles, logistics, telecommunications and computer equipment, and food supplies.

In choosing a vendor — UNHCR does not advertize its requirements publicly — price is a key criterion, but also important are proximity to the relief area and/or ease of transporting the cargo. Final decisions depend on the interaction of three factors: product quality, delivery time, and after-delivery service.

Companies wishing to do business with this agency must obtain a supplier profile form from UNHCR's Supply and Transport Section (STS) which contains a computerized, continually updated roster of 2,500 suppliers.

The address is: UNHCR-Supply and Transport Section, P.O. Box 2500, CH-1211 Geneva, 2 Depot, Switzerland.

Two permanent UNHCR offices, which centralize responses to crises in Europe and Africa, are: UNHCR, Kupska 2, Zagreb, Croatia 41000; and UNHCR, P.O. Box 43801, Nairobi, Kenya.

**Inter-Agency Procurement Services Office (IAPSO)** — coordinates and standardizes the procurement activities of all UN agencies (and identifies their sources of supply) that deal with social and economic development. While it does not procure directly, it does purchase goods and services on behalf of UN agencies and non-UN organizations that like to take advantage of its negotiated discount prices on such items as passenger vehicles, trucks, electronic and data processing equipment.

Since would-be suppliers do not register directly with IAPSO, which maintains a roster of companies that have won bids in the past, the best way to get on this roster is to participate in UN bids. Such companies could become regular sources of supply for IAPSO standard items.

Essential also — for the experienced UN contractor or the novice — are annual visits to

IAPSO's headquarters. Companies must show their wares and express their interests, especially as IAPSO makes inroads into new areas of procurement. Two such areas about which companies should inquire are, emergency assistance and "green" procurement.

Interested parties or suppliers may contact: IAPSO, Gittevej 20, Freeport, P.O. Box 2530, Denmark-2100, Copenhagen, Tel.: 011-45-35-27-3700; Fax: 011-45-35-27-3798/99.

**United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)** — a procurement agency for a growing number of government and economic development organs in the UN system, UNOP had a project budget last year that exceeded US\$400 million. The procurement breakdown was: equipment (\$126 million); services (\$84 million); and personnel hired to work in field training projects (\$193 million).

At present, though it is to change shortly, UNOPS employs three separate registration procedures: for manufacturers; for consulting companies; and for individual consultants.

The registration form contact for vendors of goods and equipment is: UNOPS-Purchasing

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