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Dottorando: ANNARITA TAVANI

Supervisore: GIULIANA ELENA GARZONE

Co-supervisore: PAOLA CATENACCIO

COORDINATORE DEL DOTTORATO: ALESSANDRO COSTAZZA

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Introduction

The world we live in is dominated by the habit of periodically reporting about activities, results, problematic situations, action that was taken to deal with those situations, etc. Virtually any socio-economic, cultural or charitable body, whether public or private, develops its own reporting practices, which usually tend to pursue a double set of institutional aims: informing the public about mission and core values, providing updated information about the implementation of projects and the planning of future action on the one hand, and on the other justifying the organization's existence and its right to operate, thus serving purposes of image-building. That is probably why over the last few decades a “colony of reporting genres” (Bhatia 2004) has been burgeoning in a number of professional settings, appropriating resources from several discourse areas and invading the territorial integrity of many a well-established discursive practice. However, report writing started to be analyzed long after the practice was established and consolidated. For this reason corporate reports already enjoy a honoured tradition of valuable analysis (Hyland 1998; Garzone 2004, 2008; Groot de 2011; Breeze 2012), while the more recent practice of institutional reporting – notably by international organizations – has to date been little explored, above all from a discourse analytical perspective (Maingueneau 2002; Pennarola / D'Acquisto 2012).

This research aims to study the annual or otherwise periodical reports authored by three international organizations – the Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Health Organization and the World Trade Organization – which have been selected among the many existing intergovernmental bodies on account of the crucial role they play in the global effort to achieve the eight Millennium Development Goals (see Chapter I, § 1.2.2., § 1.3.). These reports will be examined from a genre analytical perspective, after a preliminary study of their text type profile (Werlich 1983) and of the interpersonal dimension of the meaning-making process (Halliday / Matthiessen 2004), with a focus on two microlinguistic features which are crucial in the structuring of this level of textualization, namely the handling of person (Benveniste 1966) and modality (Palmer 1979; 1986; Coates 1983; Halliday / Matthiessen 2004). The last step in the research will consist in a close-up on a subcorpus extracted from the main corpus¹. Three shorter collections of texts consisting of the prefaces introducing the reports proper, signed by the Director-General of each organization, will be explored in their underlying ergative/transitive structures and in a number of lexical features. The motive for this close-up is twofold: on the one hand this

¹ Details about corpus and subcorpus can be found in chapters II and VII.

choice allows an accurate study of fine discursive strategies on account of the smaller size of the subcorpus, while on the other hand it is justified by the fact that the texts in the subcorpus epitomize the larger texts from which they have been excerpted.

Chapter I will draw the contextual coordinates which characterize the production of the reports under analysis. After a brief history of the United Nations and its Agencies – notably FAO and WHO – as well as the World Trade Organization, it will move on to a rough delineation of discursive practices within these institutions. The question of authorship will be faced and, more generally, the participation framework emerging from an empirical examination of text and context will be outlined from a synchronic as well as diachronic perspective with a view to detecting possible signs of evolution. The question of the communicative purpose served by institutional reports will be introduced at the end of the chapter, to be further explored in the course of the analysis.

Chapter II provides the rationale for a discourse analytical approach to the study of institutional communication, to then briefly report the views elaborated by a number of French sociologists, political scientists and the linguist Maingueneau on the documents drafted by intergovernmental bodies (Rist 2002). In particular, Maingueneau's famous definition of "discours constituant" will be introduced, which he claims to be an inappropriate label for the discourse generated by international organizations in that the essential feature of all "founding" discourse is that it is not "founded" by other discourses (Maingueneau / Cossutta 1995) and this defining trait of "discours constituant" is absent – according to Maingueneau – from this area of institutional communication. The essays published in the book edited by Rist, which is the product of longstanding research on development conducted by the *Institut Universitaire d'études du Développement*, will be examined on account of the insight they provide into the discourse originating with intergovernmental bodies, which is described as suffering from an appalling scarcity of sense. These studies, however, only consider short texts or portions of longer texts, while deploying exclusively qualitative analytical tools, which obviously raises a double doubt on the accuracy of findings due to the lack of representativeness of the corpus under analysis and on the reliability of research results, obtained through purely empirical methods. The chapter closes with a description of the corpus, divided into three subcorpora consisting of the reports drafted by the three organizations – FAO, WHO and WTO – and with the definition of research questions.

Chapter III illustrates the methodological approach adopted, which actually integrates several perspectives on a complex object of study, namely institutional discourse. Reasons will be provided for the choice of text grammatical categories as the starting point for analysis. The presentation of genre analytical tools follows in close succession, accompanied by an introduction of

some of the instruments used by Critical Discourse Analysis which will be deployed in the research, notably the study of the transitive and ergative systems as outlined by Halliday (Halliday / Matthiessen 2004) and the identification of “local meanings” trapped in microlinguistic – often lexical – features. Reasons will also be provided for the adoption of an integrated qualitative and quantitative approach. The former will be shown to be useful in the drawing of a text type profile of institutional reports, as well as in the delineation of the generic integrity of these texts on account of its crucial role in any form of content analysis, while the latter will prove an invaluable tool in the service of data gathering and processing, which is made reliable by recourse to automatic queries. The adoption of a double approach – both qualitative and quantitative – will allow the analyst to enroot an inherently subjective effort aiming to interpret data in the uncontroversial nature of automatically processed research results.

Chapter IV will move on to trace the main text types whose orchestration build the textual framework of the institutional reports making up the corpus. In this way representational strategies will be uncovered, which often surface in the choice whether to provide information in a proposition or to require action in a proposal (Halliday / Matthiessen 2004). **Chapter V** will then explore the interpersonal dimension of these texts through two essential linguistic features – the deictic category person and the handling of modality – with a view to studying the strategies of self-representation and the area of covert communicative purposes – if there be any. **Chapter VI** will eventually examine the texts from an intertextual perspective, i. e. in the complex network of relationships they establish to each other and to functionally similar texts, also in light of the community of practice in which they originate. Thus, the generic integrity of institutional reports will be studied both in terms of a recurrent cognitive-rhetorical pattern and through possible signs of discourse hybridization in a genre which may well derive from other genres – what Jamieson calls “antecedent genres” (Jamieson 1975) – of which they probably bear some trace. Finally, **chapter VII** will focus on three shorter subcorpora, extracted from the larger ones, consisting of the introductions to the reports, aiming to shed some light on the ideational dimension of the discourse of international organizations, that is to say on the strategies they adopt to represent socio-economic reality and their own role in the shaping of that reality in the most favourable way possible for purposes of image-building and self-legitimization. In this way the circle will be closed as we again face the crucial question of communicative purpose, which is both starting point and goal of any true effort at interpreting genre.

Chapter I

International organizations and their discursive practices

Within the vast area of organizational discourse, institutional language and the coordinates of its production and reception have in fairly recent times drawn the attention of critical discourse analysts (Fairclough 2001; Mayr 2008). This is a research field requiring in-depth study due to the variety of contexts in which institutional discourse originates and the extreme wealth of textual genres generated in those contexts. Among them is a discursive practice which has to date been little explored in spite of the uniqueness of its context of production and reception, namely that consisting in international organizations – primarily the United Nations, its Specialized Agencies and other intergovernmental bodies – drafting periodical reports on their institutional activities. The interest which attaches to this variety of organizational discourse is mainly connected with the multiple purposes embedded in this genre, as well as with the multiple audiences it addresses. Although the production of these texts has been thriving over the last two decades or so, little research has been conducted on them, as well as on most discursive practices of international organizations, both from a strictly linguistic and from a discourse-analytical perspective. This study aims to contribute to the critical analysis of the limited but significant and well-defined area of institutional discourse which is represented by the annual or otherwise periodical reports drafted by three international organizations: the Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Health Organization and the World Trade Organization. The first step in the research will sketch the historical context in which these institutions arose. Like these, most intergovernmental bodies are the fruit of a global wish for security and cooperation resulting from the tragedy of World War II and many of them can boast of a fifty-year-old history.

1. The role of international organizations in the post-war world

The need to base relationships between states on firmer ground than that of transactions enacted by individual sovereign entities was already felt in the second half of the XIX century, but it took almost another hundred years and two world wars to fully emerge and displace a resilient prevalence of the European model consisting in the modern state wielding absolute control over all political choices, both in

domestic and foreign affairs. Gradually, in the inter-war period, and even more so in the final phases of the Second World War and after its conclusion, the concept of international cooperation surfaced in the modern international community and became one of the dominant features of its life and activities (Marchisio 2012: 15-43). It became an orientating principle in the eyes of policy makers as well as a large number of stakeholders, guiding national states to the creation of international organizations within the framework of international law and through the adoption of its most typical normative tool, the agreement.

The reason why many national states took part in the creation of these organizations or asked to join them once they had been established was a desire to promote international cooperation without renouncing or limiting their own national sovereignty. After the first attempts at translating the principle of international cooperation into international organizations, which date back to the last decades in the XIX century, it was above all in the first years of the XX century that the seed for a deeper change in international relationships was sown. In 1905 the International Institute of Agriculture (IIA) was founded in Rome, aiming to establish an international commission for agricultural trade and laying the basis for the future creation of the UN agency for Food and Agriculture (FAO). Seventy-five countries gave their contribution to the drafting of the organization's Charter, which spelt out its tasks in terms of data collection and processing of statistics. Another institutional task was the adoption of recommendations, as well as the drawing of international conventions, which would then be submitted to the member states for approval. As regards the structure of the International Organization for Agriculture, it revolved round three organs: a General Assembly, an Executive Committee and a Secretariat. Within the Assembly and the Committee voting procedures were based on a different weight conferred on the member states as a consequence of the financing option they had chosen on entering the organization.

IIA is one among a number of international bodies set up in the early XX century, which after World War II became specialized agencies of the United Nations. The most direct antecedent to the creation of the UN and its network of satellite organizations, however, was the Society of Nations, which was founded in 1919 with the explicitly moral objective of guaranteeing a peaceful coexistence among states as they had emerged from the First World War. It is not by chance that the coming into force of the Covenant of the Society of Nations – 10th January 1920 – coincided with the coming into force of the Peace Treaty with Germany, the Treaty of Versailles.

Many saw the Society of Nations as the dawn of a totally new conception of international relationships, based on the structuring of a superstate establishing a

global governance. This interpretation of the Society of Nations does not correspond to historical truth as the organization featured in fact as an element of continuity with the past, voicing the need for greater collaboration among states, but fundamentally confirming and consolidating the principle of national sovereignty. An interesting aspect was represented by the introduction of a tripartite structure in terms of leading organs: a General Assembly, a Council with limited membership, and a Secretariat. The problematic question, which eventually brought the Society and its mandate to failure, was Council membership. The Covenant envisaged permanent membership for five states – the Allies of World War I: France, Japan, the United Kingdom, Italy and the United States – while conferring temporary membership on four states, to be chosen by the General Assembly. The USA, however, never sat in the Council as the Senate chose not to ratify the Covenant. On the other hand, the number of temporary members progressively increased from four to six, then nine and finally eleven, consequently diminishing the interest of permanent members in the activities of an organization which was gradually taking on the features of an almost egalitarian community. The lasting innovation introduced by the Society of Nations, which proved extremely far-reaching in its implications on the future creation of international organizations, was the nature of its mandate, focusing on a collaborative effort to preserve peace on the world scene.

Unfortunately, it was this effort to keep peace in Europe and elsewhere – where “peace” was interpreted as the keeping of the political and military balance and of the territorial integrity emerging from the Peace Treaty – which caused misunderstandings in the reading of the crucial concept of “aggression” in the difficult handling of international crises immediately before the outbreak of the Second World War. At all events, the Covenant sanctioned the principle of the peaceful solution of controversies arising between member states through the judicial mediation of the Council and, when necessary, through the adoption of economic and commercial – in extreme cases even military – sanctions on those states which did not comply with the provisos of the Covenant. As regards possible attacks on the territorial integrity of member states on the part of external powers, the Society envisaged the recourse to peaceful means of balance keeping, leaving military solutions to extreme cases. A project for mutual assistance was discussed within the General Assembly, with the aim of substantiating the principle of peaceful maintenance of international security, which was later incorporated in the Geneva Protocol on the peaceful solution of international controversies, adopted by the Assembly on 2nd October 1924, but unfortunately ratified only by a minority of member states. Similarly, the General Treaty on the repudiation of war as an instrument of national policy was ratified by a limited number of member states. The

Society of Nations therefore played a leading role in the promotion of a new conception of mutual acknowledgement and mutual assistance within the framework of peaceful international relationships, but it failed to implement this principle in the way individual states shaped their foreign affairs policy.

1.1. International cooperation: the rise of the United Nations

It was during the Second World War that the seeds for international cooperation on many levels were sown. The London Conference, in which the Ministers of Education of the Allied powers sat in 1942, produced the suggestion, on the part of the French Minister, for the creation of an international organization aiming to promote science and culture, which eventually led to the post-war London Conference in November 1945 and its most valuable fruit, the foundation of the Organization of the United Nations for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO). Similarly, the international Conference on nutrition and agriculture, which was held in Hot Springs in June 1943, led to the activities of a committee invested with the solemn task of elaborating the founding document for the United Nations Organization for Food and Agriculture (FAO), which was eventually approved by the Quebec Conference in October 1945. Aiming to further President Roosevelt's projects for international monetary and financial cooperation, a Conference was held in Bretton Woods in July 1944, whose work was conducive to the adoption of the Charters of a world bank and of an international monetary fund.

Times were now ripe for a new international organization endowed with a universal nature and pursuing general political purposes. That was the United Nations, whose foundation Charter was adopted on 26th June 1945 by the San Francisco Conference. The UN and its sixteen specialized agencies inaugurated an era characterized by the booming of intergovernmental organizations, some of them on a universal basis, while others had an intercontinental composition and the majority shared a regional or sub-regional scale. The general belief that international cooperation should forge a new world scene kindled the hope that the time-honoured model of the sovereign nation state may be overridden by a new universal governance. The founding fathers of the United Nations, however, were well aware of the real scope of the newborn institution, which was no global superstate and was in fact defined by the Preamble of the Charter "an international organization" (UN 1945), that is to say an organization among individual nations (Marchisio 2012: 45-89).

As regards the mandate of the United Nations, its definition is an extremely difficult task as it is immensely vast and only vaguely outlined by the Charter, whose article 2.7 establishes the principle that the UN is not to deal with questions which are

typically ascribed to the competence of each individual state. It is therefore a negative definition of competence which is provided, even though article 1 of the Charter does indeed provide a list of institutional purposes, which is, however, so comprehensive as to appear indeterminate and decidedly vague in the legal sense of the term (Bhatia / Engberg / Gotti / Heller 2005). The maintenance of peace and international security is the first objective mentioned, followed by a focus on friendly relationships among states, arising from mutual acknowledgement of equal rights and primarily of the right to self-determination. Another crucial institutional purpose is international cooperation on an economic, social, cultural and humanitarian level with a view to disseminating awareness of and respect for fundamental human rights and liberties, irrespective of differences in race, sex, language and religion. Implementing the UN mandate is no easy task. Since its foundation the United Nations has tackled all the areas of institutional activity, focusing on peace keeping policies in the years following the end of World War II and in the 1950s moving on to policies favouring the process of decolonization, which was grounded on the right of peoples to self-determination. In the 1970s the focus shifted to economic, social, cultural and humanitarian cooperation in the hope to smooth out inequalities and further global development. Finally, since the fall of the Berlin Wall action has been newly taken with the aim of establishing or consolidating peace and international security.

Article 7 of the Charter defines the main organs of the UN and describes their composition and tasks. The General Assembly consists of representatives of all member states, which invariably cast a single vote, irrespective of their size and population. The decision power conferred on the Assembly is limited to the adoption of recommendations, which, however, are no binding acts, and to the negotiation of agreements, which need to be ratified by each member state. The organ wielding the greatest power is the Security Council, which alone decides on measures to be taken against aggressors menacing international peace. The Council is made up of five permanent members – the USA, the UK, France, Russia and China – which enjoy veto right on all decisions, and ten temporary members, which are chosen by the Assembly every two years. The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is under the control of the Assembly, which chooses its members every three years. It has no decision power and mainly drafts the acts dealing with economic and social questions, which are then formally adopted by the Assembly. The Secretary General, who is designated by the Assembly on the nomination of the Council, has executive functions, while the International Court of Justice, consisting of fifteen judges, is the main judiciary organ of the United Nations. In dealing with controversies, the court roughly features as an international court, that is to say it is an arbitrating organ. Another important function of the International Court of Justice is that of consultation

in that any of the UN organs may ask the Court for advice on any judicial question. The advice provided by the Court, however, is not mandatory. The Secretary General and the Court of Justice are the only organs consisting of individuals who derive their function from the organization itself and are therefore bound to pursue the interests of the International Community and not those of their own countries, which they do not represent.

The Charter is fundamentally an international treaty, but it also carries the essential traits of a constitution since it has originated an organization, with all its organs, invested with a supremely important mandate whose core is the maintenance of peace. It covers two main areas: the definition of the organs and their functions and the system of norms regulating the mutual relationships of member states. The Charter is sometimes described as the constitution of the International Community, as demonstrated by the UN task of dealing, when necessary, with controversies with non-member states, which contradicts the nature of the Charter as a treaty. The written constitution represented by the Charter is accompanied by the “living” constitution resulting from the daily activities of the organs and of the member states within each organ. At all events, the Charter is a treaty and consequently obeys the principles of international law, which classifies it as an international agreement with binding effects only on those states which have freely chosen to enter it.

In comparatively recent years the Charter has been the object of a lively debate on the necessity of modifying a few norms in it. The need to update it stems from the rather different international context in which the organization presently operates and from the ever increasing number of member states, which has trebled since the days of the creation of the UN and which now almost coincides with the total number of existing national entities. The governments of several member states have drawn up suggestions for innovation which go in the direction of a strengthening of the role of the Assembly, which should ideally change from an assembly of governments into a chamber of the democratically elected representatives of the peoples with control power over the Council. Another change which is often advocated is an increase in the number of members of the Security Council, both permanent and temporary, so as to guarantee the presence of states from all geographical regions. Finally, requests have been made to eliminate the right of the permanent members to veto any decision taken by the Council. There is still another area of change for the Charter, that is to say the formal inclusion into the document of the principles which have been defined and declared by the organization over the years, in particular the principles concerning the keeping of peace and the concept of aggression on the one hand and the principles of economic and social cooperation on the other, for example the right of peoples to sustainable development, economic justice and security and to full

sovereignty over natural resources. The Charter also defines membership and admission to the organization. In addition to the founding members, any state may apply for admission, which will be granted on condition that the applying state is prepared to further peace and to accept and perform the institutional mandate of the UN. Admission is granted by the Assembly and the Council, which are consulted through a voting procedure in which the Council has more power than the Assembly and the permanent states have the right to veto any decision taken by the other members. At present almost all states in the world are members of the UN, with only a handful of exceptions, Switzerland among them. Finally, the Charter classifies the acts adopted by the organization into recommendations and declarations of principles, which are not mandatory, though often laden with consequences, and decisions and resolutions, which share a fundamentally mandatory nature (Conforti / Focarelli 2010).

1.2. The Specialized Agencies

The UN's mandate to further social, economic, cultural and humanitarian development, which is strongly connected to the primary institutional peace-keeping aim of the United Nations, is specifically pursued by the many Specialized Agencies which have sprouted over the years as independent organizations, although they act under the control and coordination of the UN. Each Agency was originated by a unique treaty which is absolutely external to the Charter. Their functions are similar to those performed by the UN organs dealing with international cooperation, that is to say they draw and adopt non-binding normative acts, in particular recommendations and projects for multilateral conventions, or they actively take action in the area of international aids. Their organs are an Assembly consisting of representatives of each member state, a Council with limited representation and a Secretariat which represents the organization and carries responsibility for a number of activities performed or promoted by the organization. The connection between each Agency and the United Nations is provided by an agreement negotiated by the UN Economic and Social Council and approved by the General Assembly, and which is finally signed by the two organizations. To date all such agreements have followed the model set in 1946, when FAO, UNESCO and ILO were grounded on the principles of autonomy and collaboration with the UN through special treaties. That model contemplates the exchange of observers, representatives and documents and, when necessary, the recourse to consultations, technical service coordination and the need for the Agency to at least examine UN recommendations. The core of the agreement, which confers the nature of Specialized Agency on the organization which signs it, consists in the acceptance of those norms in the Charter which apply to Specialized

Agencies and place them under the control and coordination power of the United Nations. Among these norms are the ones established by Articles 58 and 60 – which enable the Assembly and the Economic and Social Council to adopt recommendations aiming to coordinate the activities and projects of the Agencies – by Article 64 – which entitles the Council to require regular reports on the activities promoted by the Agencies – and by Article 17 – which invests the General Assembly with the power to check the Agencies’ financial statements and to issue recommendations when necessary.

Relationships between the UN and its Specialized Agencies have thickened since international cooperation became prominent among UN areas of activity, particularly after the creation of UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) in 1966. All Agencies are represented within a UNDP organ, the Consulting Committee, and they implement the regional projects worked out by UNDP. Collaboration between the United Nations Development Programme and the various Agencies takes place on a peer basis as the two parties relate to each other as equals. As regards the legal status of the agreements between the UN and the Specialized Agencies, there is a long-standing debate as to whether they can be considered full-fledged international treaties, producing rights and duties for both parties and implying their international legal personality, or whether they should be regarded as systems of norms which define the functions of either organization and which consequently fit either into the Charter or into the Agency’s founding treaty (Conforti / Focarelli 2010). What is certain is that the Charter features the institutional purpose of economic and social cooperation as instrumental to the pursual of the UN’s mandate, consisting primarily in the keeping of peace and international security. In this way, the Charter envisages the possibility of transferring activities aiming at social and economic cooperation to other independent entities, the so-called Specialized Agencies, thus placing the United Nations in a position of first among equals (Marchisio 2012: 345-386).

1.2.1. The Food and Agriculture Organization

Three Agencies will be examined in greater detail for the purposes of this dissertation, whose object of investigation is offered by their discursive practices. The first is the Food and Agriculture Organization, which was founded in 1945, when representatives from forty-two countries signed the Constitution of FAO in Quebec City, Canada, on 16th October (FAO 2011). This was the fruit of preparatory work dating back to 18th May 1943, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt invited the Allied countries to the Conference on Food and Agriculture in Hot Springs, Virginia, which saw the adoption of the Final Act consisting in thirty-three recommendations and three reports on agricultural production. The need was thus recognized to pursue

greater global agricultural output and to extend technical knowledge, while each government was considered responsible for ensuring sufficient food for its population. The Conference ended with the creation of a Commission, whose task was to draft a Constitution for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, that is to say the organization which was to replace the International Institute of Agriculture. The Resolution adopted in Hot Springs (Final Act) outlined the Organization's mandate and structure – with a Secretariat, a Conference and an Executive Council, similarly to the structure of the United Nations and its other Specialized Agencies – and indicated some causes of hunger and poverty. The expansion of industry in poor areas and equality of access to materials and markets was represented as instrumental to an increase in productivity, while tariffs and other impediments to international trade – such as excessive fluctuations in exchange – featured as detrimental to the production, distribution and consumption of food. The Conference held on 16th October 1945 in Quebec City sanctioned the creation of FAO and derived a number of Recommendations from the Constitution, requiring member states to improve nutrition and life quality within their territory by maximizing productivity and favouring food distribution, by enhancing living standards in rural areas and by contributing to the expansion of the global economy.

The headquarters for the Food and Agriculture Organization were originally established in Washington DC, but the Fifth General Conference in 1949 opted for their transference to Rome, which had already housed the newly dissolved IIA, whose expertise and staff were thus handed down to FAO. Since then, the number of people working for FAO has risen from around 580 to about 1,956 in Rome alone. In the 1960s three important initiatives marked the activity of the Food and Agriculture Organization: the “Freedom from Hunger Campaign” (FFHC), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The “Freedom from Hunger Campaign” was launched by FAO in 1960, aiming to mobilize national and international institutions to eradicate global hunger and to show how Non-Governmental Organizations may collaborate with FAO in the common struggle against malnutrition and undernourishment. The World Food Programme was established in the 1960s with a view to providing FAO with means of food aid intervention where and when needed. Till then FAO's mandate had consisted essentially in gathering data, working out statistics, raising awareness and elaborating food policies. The creation of the WFP also answered the need of the industrialized countries to manage their food surpluses and at the same time contribute to the economic and social development of poorer countries, where preschool nutrition, agricultural productivity and rural welfare were identified as priorities. The Programme featured as an administrative unit with an organ reporting

to both FAO and the UN. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) was instrumental to establishing some form of control over the international trade of agricultural products. The creation of the Codex Alimentarius Commission in 1963 inaugurated collaboration between FAO and WHO on a programme for food safety and the protection of consumer health. The Commission has since then developed norms and set standards, either in regional or global settings. In 1967 FAO's new Director-General tried to shift emphasis from quantity to quality, from increasing food commodities to technological development and productivity. In order to achieve this goal, he reorganized the institutional bureaucracy and found new funding sources. These reforms were implemented in the early '70s, at the time of the worst food crisis since World War II, which was made worse by the devastating effects of a severe drought in the extremely poor Sahel-Sudan region. In 1973 the International Undertaking on World Food Security was signed by a great number of industrialized countries, which pledged themselves to offer their food surpluses at reasonable prices in times of food shortages. The World Food Conference held in 1974 adopted the "Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition", which anchored the battle for food security on the removal of injustice from society: if all human beings were provided with equal opportunities, they would defeat hunger and malnutrition on a global scale. In 1985 the "World Food Security Compact" was signed by all member states, which thus acknowledged that it was everybody's responsibility to eradicate hunger.

The three mandates of Jacques Diouf (in 1994, 2000 and 2006) marked the history of FAO through the launch of a few crucial projects: among them the Special Programme for Food Security, aiming to halve the number of hungry people by 2015, which largely coincides with Millennium Development Goal number 1 (MDG1). National and regional food security programmes and policies have also been implemented. The World Food Summits of 1996, 2002 and 2009 have offered great opportunities for pooling information and expertise on the one hand and for planning common action on the other. In particular, the World Summit on Food Security held in November 2009 saw a great effort towards reaching MDG1 through the adoption of the "Rome Declaration", which emphasized the need for coordination and cooperation in the struggle against hunger and actually achieved strategic handling of global, regional and local aids. A key role in FAO's attempt to attain MDG1 has been played by the many specialized agencies working in the agriculture and nutrition sector. The most recent trend in FAO's activity has seen a consistent effort to modernize the organization and primarily the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), which should ideally focus on dialogue and collaborative work, favouring consensus-reaching strategies in the process of taking political as well as technical

decisions in the field of food security. A High Level Panel of Experts should provide the necessary scientific and technical expertise on a number of issues including agriculture, environmental questions, biotechnology, climate change, finance and trade. This reforming ferment – originating from the report of the Independent External Evaluation of FAO (IEE) in 2007 and leading to the adoption of the Immediate Plan of Action for FAO Renewal in 2008 – will undoubtedly benefit FAO and its ancillary agencies, the World Food Programme and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), whose collaboration will hopefully contribute to the accomplishment of FAO's mandate (<http://www.fao.org>) to achieve “food security for all [...] to make sure people have regular access to enough high-quality food to lead active, healthy lives [...] and] to raise levels of nutrition, improve agricultural productivity, better the lives of rural populations and contribute to the growth of the world economy.”

1.2.2. The World Health Organization

The second organization to be examined in its origin, institutional purposes, structure and activity is the World Health Organization. In the Americas, the oldest international health agency in the world, the International Sanitary Bureau, was founded in 1902 (McCarthy 2002). In Europe, L'Office International d'Hygiene Publique was created in 1907, and in 1919 the League of Nations established the Health Organisation of the League of Nations in Geneva. In 1945, with the end of World War II, the UN Conference on International Organizations in San Francisco envisaged the creation of a new international health organization, which was launched a year later when the International Health Conference in New York signed the Constitution of the World Health Organization. In 1948 the WHO became operative, with the World Health Assembly acting as “the supreme decision-making body for WHO” (<http://www.who.int>), generally meeting in Geneva once a year in May, with delegations from all Member States.

The First World Health Assembly met in Geneva in the summer of 1948 and established some of the organization's priorities: malaria, tuberculosis, maternal and child health, nutrition and disease prevention. The Executive Board was established by the Constitution as the organ which provides advice and implements the policies of the Health Assembly, consisting of health experts elected to be members of the Board for a three-year term. The third organ of WHO is the Director-General, who leads and represents the Organization and is appointed by the World Health Assembly on the nomination of the Executive Board. The Constitution featured the organization as open to all States without exception. One of the greatest challenges facing the First World Health Assembly was the decentralization of activities, with

the creation of regional organizations within WHO. The hottest questions were the number of regions to be established, the countries they should include, when exactly they should start their activities and how they should be financed. After long debate, the Assembly delineated six regions: Africa, the Americas, the Eastern Mediterranean, Europe, South-East Asia and the Western Pacific. In 1953, the World Health Assembly overtly proclaimed the principles at the basis of regionalization, invested the Executive Board with the task of periodically reporting on regionalization and entrusted the guidance of regional offices to the Director-General, who should assist them in their effort to comply with the WHO principles and adopt the policies established by the WHO governing bodies. The World Health Assembly also recommended the exchange of staff among regions and between headquarters and regions. The prevailing view of regionalization consisted in the decentralization only of those functions which could be more efficiently performed on a local basis, with no rigid allocation of functions between central and local levels. One of the main tasks of regional offices was to relate WHO to national governments and to provide the latter with the necessary information and advice on health matters. Indeed, the mandate of the World Health Organization (<<http://www.who.int>>) largely coincides with the function of

providing leadership on matters critical to health and engaging in partnerships where joint action is needed; shaping the research agenda and stimulating the generation, translation and dissemination of valuable knowledge; setting norms and standards and promoting and monitoring their implementation; articulating ethical and evidence-based policy options; providing technical support, catalysing change, and building sustainable institutional capacity; and monitoring the health situation and assessing health trends.

These functions, which are detailed in the 11th General Programme of Work “Engaging for health”, specifically introduce WHO’s programme for the time span 2006-2015, though in fact they delineate the institutional purposes of the World Health Organization from its foundation to the present day.

An emblematic example of WHO activity in the field of “setting norms and standards and promoting and monitoring their implementation” (<<http://www.who.int>>) is the establishment of the International Health Regulations (IHR) against the spread of infectious diseases. Another recent innovation is WHO’s Strategic Health Operations Centre, which acts primarily in times of disease outbreaks and humanitarian emergencies. The IHR set down rules that countries must follow to timely detect disease outbreaks and stop them from spreading. In 2005, the IHR were expanded to cover new diseases such as SARS and new strains of influenza. In the 1950s WHO had already undertaken to classify diseases on an International List of Causes of Death. The ICD (International statistical Classification

of Diseases and related health problems) has become the international standard for clinical and epidemiological purposes. Among the most valuable achievements of the World Health Organization is the eradication of such devastating diseases as smallpox. The campaign for smallpox eradication was launched in 1958, and by 1977 the last confirmed case of smallpox was identified in Somalia. Consequently, in 1980 the Global Commission for Certification of Smallpox Eradication suggested routine smallpox vaccination should be suspended. Disease control and eradication were achieved over the years thanks to regular inoculation programmes and primarily through the Expanded Programme on Immunization, which aims to inoculate all children against diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, measles, poliomyelitis, and tuberculosis. This goal, still unachieved, is now being pursued by the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization. In 1970 WHO launched an Expanded Programme of Research, Development, and Research Training in Human Reproduction, which focused on fertility regulation and birth-control methods.

In 1978 WHO adopted the Declaration of Alma-Ata, requiring states all over the world to prioritize high-quality primary health care. The conference of Alma-Ata was attended by delegates of the governments of all member states, by representatives of UN Specialized Agencies and NGOs. It proclaimed the principle that the health status of hundreds of millions of people in the world was unacceptable and called for a new approach to health and health care. The Alma-Ata Declaration paved the way for the adoption in 1981 of a global strategy aiming to achieve health for all by the year 2000, through a more equitable distribution of health resources, which would enable all human beings to lead a socially and economically productive life. Health was in fact envisaged as a powerful tool in the service of socioeconomic development and peace. In 1987 WHO launched the Safe Motherhood Initiative, pursuing the objective of halving maternal morbidity and mortality by the year 2000. Maternal health remains an unattained goal and consequently continues to be a prominent area of WHO activity, while lifestyle disorders like diabetes, cancer and cardiovascular disease have never abandoned their steadfast growth, above all in developing countries, alongside with growing awareness of the risk connected with them and of the need to promote healthy tobacco-free living standards. Ever since the UN Conference on Environment and Development (the “Earth Summit”), which was held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, WHO has launched programmes dealing with the connection between health and environmental questions. Another challenge facing WHO has been the spread of the deadly HIV infection, against which a joint UN/WHO programme replaced WHO’s Global Programme on AIDS in 1993 (WHO 1998).

In September 2000 world leaders from all UN member states and several international organizations signed the United Nations Millennium Declaration to combat poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation, and discrimination against women. The document consists in eight Development Goals which signatory states have undertaken to achieve by the year 2015 (<http://www.who.int>):

MDG 1: eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; MDG 2: achieve universal primary education; MDG 3: promote gender equality and empower women; MDG 4: reduce child mortality; MDG 5: improve maternal health; MDG 6: combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; MDG 7: ensure environmental sustainability; MDG 8: develop a global partnership for development.

The main goals concerning WHO are MDG 4, 5 and 6, while MDG 1 and 7 are pursued jointly by WHO, FAO and the WTO.

1.3. The World Trade Organization: a fully independent body

The World Trade Organization too has endorsed the Millennium Development Goals, although it is no UN Specialized Agency. The WTO is in fact an independent intergovernmental organization striving to achieve a free fair trading system. The two MDGs closely fitting into the WTO agenda are Millennium Development Goal 1, whose aim is to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, and Millennium Development Goal 8, that is to say boosting development through a global partnership. As a matter of fact, MDGs are intrinsically interconnected, as recognized by the World Trade Organization, which sees international trade and socio-economic development as mutually linked through a strong causal relationship. That explains why the WTO favours trade in order to foster economic growth in developing countries, as declared in the Doha Declaration adopted by the WTO Fourth Ministerial Conference in Doha, Qatar on 14th November 2001 (<http://www.wto.org>):

International trade can play a major role in the promotion of economic development and the alleviation of poverty. We recognize the need for all our peoples to benefit from the increased opportunities and welfare gains that the multilateral trading system generates. The majority of WTO members are developing countries. We seek to place their needs and interests at the heart of the Work Programme adopted in this Declaration.

MDG 8, that is “A Global Partnership for Development” is further declined into six targets (<http://www.wto.org>):

Target A Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system; Target B Address the special needs of the least developed countries; Target C Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small island developing

States; Target D Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries; Target E In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries; Target F In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communication.

Since its creation in 1995, the World Trade Organization has been working in favour of a free trading system allegedly benefiting all countries and most of all those which are least capable of autonomously increasing their production and exchange of goods and services. The WTO's objective has thus always been "to help trade flow smoothly, freely, fairly and predictably" in order to further global economic and commercial development. The connection between free trade and economic growth is explicitly envisaged on the organization's website (<http://www.wto.org>):

The WTO provides a forum for negotiating agreements aimed at reducing obstacles to international trade and ensuring a level playing field for all, thus contributing to economic growth and development.

The WTO's mandate combines this boosting of trade and development through the negotiation of trading agreements with the establishment of an international forum interpreting these agreements and monitoring their implementation. Institutional aims are poignantly encapsulated in the current Director-General Pascal Lamy's mission statement on the organization's website:

The WTO's founding and guiding principles remain the pursuit of open borders, the guarantee of most-favoured-nation principle and non-discriminatory treatment by and among members, and a commitment to transparency in the conduct of its activities. The opening of national markets to international trade, with justifiable exceptions or with adequate flexibilities, will encourage and contribute to sustainable development, raise people's welfare, reduce poverty, and foster peace and stability. At the same time, such market opening must be accompanied by sound domestic and international policies that contribute to economic growth and development according to each member's needs and aspirations.

The Marrakech Agreement establishing the WTO (<http://www.wto.org>) explicitly recognizes that "there is need for positive efforts designed to ensure that developing countries, and especially the least developed among them, secure a share in the growth in international trade commensurate with the needs of their economic development." The 1994 Marrakech Declaration adopted by governments participating in the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations and sanctioning the transition from GATT to the WTO commits the newborn organization to "greater global coherence of policies in the fields of trade, money and finance, including cooperation between the WTO, the IMF and the World Bank for that purpose." Interorganizational cooperation is thus envisaged as essential to

intergovernmental cooperation on the way to a fair free trading system in which socioeconomic development stands as a priority both for the least developed countries (LDCs) and for the global community.

The Marrakech Declaration was the final act to the so-called Uruguay Round of Negotiations, which saw the participation of 123 states and was conducted under the aegis of GATT from 1986 to 1994 (Cantoni 2008: 67-110). The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade had been signed in 1947 in the wake of the Second World War with a view to reducing tariffs in international commercial exchanges. The Agreement was never ratified, and yet it governed international trade for half a century, though its extreme flexibility occasionally turned into an impediment to its widespread application. The peculiarity of GATT was its voting system, in which every represented government cast a single vote, irrespective of its population or role on the international scene. In good time the focus shifted from a reduction of tariffs to a control over non-tariff measures, which had revealed their potentially disruptive force in the face of free trade. At all events, keeping both tariffs and non-tariff measures in check were the two objectives being pursued by GATT through several rounds of negotiations, which conferred great flexibility and adaptability on the Agreement, but also maimed its ability to govern international relationships due to the absolute freedom of signatory states in the choice whether or not to ratify the negotiated agreements. It was with the eighth round (also known as Uruguay Round) of negotiations that the World Trade Organization was established. The Marrakech Declaration gave completion to the Uruguay Round and turned an agreement into an institution, at the same time extending the coverage of multilateral regulations from the exchange of a number of goods to the exchange of services and intellectual property as well as agricultural products. What is known as Marrakech Agreement or GATT 1994 became part of the WTO Agreement as one of the Multilateral Commercial Agreements, a term which in the new WTO system designates those agreements which must be accepted by signatory states as they are, with no possibility of making any change since they are mandatory. Member states must therefore conform their legislation to the WTO Agreement, which is superordinate in the hierarchy of all multilateral agreements. In this way the extreme flexibility which had characterized GATT, softening its impact on international trade, was rejected in favour of uniformity and universal applicability. As a matter of fact, waivers do feature in the Agreement, but they are considered admissible only in the event of “exceptional circumstances” and for a limited time span. It is the Ministerial Conference which unanimously decides on waivers or, in the absence of a unanimous decision, has to reach a three-fourths majority. As regards objectives and functions, there is substantial continuity between GATT and the WTO in that

they both foster free trade, universal labour and sustainable development, as well as further multilateral negotiations. The World Trade Organization is also concerned with the settlement of disputes and with various control policies, the Trade Policy Review Mechanism (TPRM) among them.

An important feature of the WTO is its international legal personality, which enables it to stipulate international agreements quite independently of the will manifested by each individual state. The organs established by the Agreement for the achievement of institutional aims are the Ministerial Conference, which is the WTO's Assembly, consisting of ministerial representatives of member states and sitting at least twice a year, the General Council, which is made up of diplomats from all member states and discharges the functions of executive board, of Dispute Settlement Body and Trade Policy Review Body, and the Secretariat, representing the World Trade Organization internationally. In addition, there are further permanent or temporary organs and committees working on special projects, all of which share the same decision-making process, based on the principle of consensus: only when there is formal opposition to a decision does the voting procedure set in, which varies in the majority required according to matter coverage – a qualified majority is required for waivers and for decisions on the interpretation of the Agreements. The hierarchical structure of the WTO, with the Ministerial Conference as the head of the pyramid, has universally been recognized as a warrant for the fair interpretation and application of international commercial agreements.

2. Report writing in international organizations

Discourse is not only the product of intellectual activity: it is primarily a form of intellectual doing and the driver of all human effort, both intellectual and otherwise. That is why the enormous mass of discourse produced by such international organizations as FAO, WHO and the WTO does not simply represent the outcome of laborious talking and writing sessions and the result of painstaking rounds of negotiation. Rather, it is the quintessence of the intrinsically discursive work done by management, staff and membership as embodied by the policy-makers specially appointed to take decisions and provide political guidance. Most of what goes on in international organizations is in actual fact discursive in nature or concerned with the making and processing of discourse.

That said, it is obvious that institutional discourse plays a key role in the life of international institutions and that a great amount of resources goes into the design and realization of discursive activities. Organizations like FAO, WHO and the WTO have developed a flourishing publishing division, which issues a wealth of texts both in

print and on the World-Wide Web, either periodically or in isolated form¹. These texts are mainly reports or topical studies on questions of momentous relevance and may well be interpreted in terms of Public Relations campaigns launched by the institutions, which feature very much like corporations deploying the best of their communication strategies to win over stakeholders at all levels. Enlarging commitment to a global size is indeed fundamental for such causes as the eradication of hunger, disease and commercial isolation. That is why a whole range of discursive processes and products has been designed in the six official languages of the United Nations – English, French, Spanish, Russian, Chinese and Arabic – by FAO and WHO, in English, French and Spanish by WTO, aiming to both improve the reputation of international organizations and disseminate knowledge about problems, possible solutions and action which has already been implemented. Obtaining consensus by reporting satisfying results, shielding from criticism about problematic issues by hinting at insurmountable difficulties and consolidating goodwill through emphasis on the values prized by the institutions are common tools of persuasion with both private and public organisms, which deploy a whole range of rhetorical resources to establish and maintain their corporate image. This objective is pursued both by means of specialized publications, often accompanied by a press kit – usually a press release – and by recourse to the appealing strategies of web-mediated communication. Every organization has a website, which informs the public about events, projects and updates in real time. The webpage consists of a photograph illustrating a topical issue, accompanied by a short text explaining the photograph and surrounded by a number of headings which hypertextually connect to second-level pages exploring a variety of issues: information about the organization, latest publications, factfiles, statistical data, highlights, events – either recent or upcoming – statements by the management, etc. The main toolbar giving access to second-level pages which introduce the main information nuclei is either to the right of the homepage – as happens with FAO’s website – or above the page – as is the case with WHO and the WTO. The buttons on the toolbar cover similar thematic areas in the three websites:

- (1) FAO Home
 - About FAO
 - Knowledge Forum
 - FAO Reform
 - FAO Governance

¹ The UN has published an online training course for staff entrusted with writing tasks in the many UN Agencies (United Nations 2007).

Publications
Statistics
Countries
Topics

- (2) Home Health topics Data and statistics Media centre Publications Countries
Programmes and projects About WHO
- (3) Home About WTO News and events Trade topics WTO membership Documents
and resources WTO and you

All three homepages end with links connecting the surfer to Twitter, Facebook, You Tube and other social networks, thus enabling them to constantly keep updated with last-minute news and comments. By clicking on Publications – Documents and resources on the WTO webpage – the surfer is connected to an archive of both old and late texts published by the organization, which it is possible to either download or buy in print. Some of them are studies on specific issues, while others are periodical reports. For example, the WTO website lists the following “Recent publications”:

- >World Tariff Profiles 2011
- >Trade Profiles 2011
- >Making Globalization Socially Sustainable
- >Centre William Rappard: Home of the World Trade Organization
- >World Trade Report 2011
- >Aid for Trade at a Glance 2011: Showing Results
- >Trade Patterns and Global Value Chains in East Asia: from trade in goods to trade in tasks
- >WTO Annual Report 2011
- >The WTO Regime on Government Procurement: Challenge and Reform
- >WTO Appellate Body

Similarly, the WHO indicates the following publications:

- World Health Statistics*
- International Travel and Health*
- International Health Regulations*
- The International Classification of Diseases*

Both organizations open the list of publications with the *World Trade Report* and *The World Health Report* respectively, thus suggesting that this is their flagship publication, which explains intents and activities and annually provides updates on the organization’s doings. The WTO also publishes – and indicates on the list – an *Annual Report* which features very much like a corporate financial report. As regards FAO, the website lists six flagship publications:

- The State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA)*
- The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA)*
- State of the World's Forests (SOFO)*
- The State of Food Insecurity in the World (SOFI)*
- The State of Agricultural Commodity Markets (SOCO)*
- The State of the World's Land and Water Resources(SOLAW)*

This abundance of information dissemination serves the purposes of disclosing institutional aims and achievements to an international audience, which shares the qualities of a “domestic” and “foreign” interlocutor. In this sense the discursive practices enacted by these organizations on their website and in their publications can be seen as a form of public diplomacy as well as public relations.² This double nature clearly emerges from an analysis of the context in which those practices are embedded. Indeed, the delineation of authorship and readership of the institutional discourse generated by international organizations and the definition of communicative purposes provide the coordinates for a discourse-analytical perspective on the discursive products of these institutions.

2.1. Participation framework

An analysis of the participation framework (Goffman 1981) underlying the discourse produced by intergovernmental bodies sheds light on crucial contextual features, which clarify the nature and scope of their discursive practices and products, in particular the reports they draft periodically. Gilbert Rist (Rist 2002) describes the reports drawn by the United Nations as the Indian Chief’s talk, simultaneously addressing everybody and nobody. As a matter of fact, they are structured as a form of multi-level communication enacting different strategies on the basis of the ideal readership which is being aimed at on each communicative level, while authorship remains rather stable. The United Nations’ reports, like all periodical publications issued by international organizations, are in fact the product of collaborative work done by a number of writers ranging from staff of the Secretariat to experts consulted for the purposes of the study, including members of other organizations or Programmes established by the UN and its Specialized Agencies with the aim of pooling expertise and efforts for the attainment of a common humanitarian goal. Some of these reports are signed by the Director-General, while others – especially those published by Agencies and other institutions, do not place any individual writer in authorial position, either on the cover of the document or within the text; some indicate the name of all contributors and collaborators on the front page or in a

² On public diplomacy and the Web, see Garzone Giuliana E. / Degano Chiara 2010.

special acknowledgement section. Authorial responsibility thus fluctuates from single to multiple subjects, and in some cases it is even attributed to more than one institution, as happens with the 2010 issue of FAO's *State of Food Insecurity*, whose *Foreword* is jointly signed by FAO's Director-General and the World Food Programme's Executive Director, and with the 2011 edition, which adds a third signature in the *Foreword*, namely that of the President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development. It is interesting to note that it is not simply a question of who signs the *Foreword*: the above mentioned issues of *SOFI* place the organizations featured therein in signatory position also at the bottom of the cover page of the whole document, in authorial position, whereas FAO is indicated alone when accompanied by place and year of publication, that is to say in its guise as publisher. It is debatable whether this plural authorship is to be interpreted as a choral one or whether it is simply the product of the pooling of competences and skills on the one hand and of statistical data collection and elaboration on the other. Perhaps this coalescence of collaborative activities is best described in terms of what Dominique Maingueneau calls "l'hyperénonciateur" of community-generated discourses (Maingueneau 2004: 118-124):

[...] les participations de groupe [...] impliquent des locuteurs collectifs. Elles visent à la fusion imaginaire des individus dans un locuteur collectif qui par son énonciation institue et confirme l'appartenance de chacun au groupe. Ce Thésaurus et la communauté correspondante sont référés à un hyperénonciateur dont l'autorité garantit moins la vérité de l'énoncé – au sens étroit d'une adéquation à un état de choses du monde – mais plus largement sa «validité», son adéquation aux valeurs, aux fondements d'une collectivité. [...] Il y a en particulier le cas des textes qui font l'objet d'une élaboration collective. Cela recouvre des phénomènes très divers, selon la relation qui s'établit entre les sujets qui ont coopéré et la manière dont le produit fini réfléchit sa propre production. Par exemple, la responsabilité des textes publicitaires est attribuée à un locuteur individualisé, la marque, dont on connaît les propriétés anthropomorphiques; pourtant, ces textes sont notoirement produits par une agence de publicité, qui les signe de manière extrêmement discrète. Il existe aussi un certain nombre [...] de discours émanants d'appareils (de l'ONU aux syndicats en passant par des associations sportives) où le texte, attribué à un énonciateur institutionnel, résulte d'une négociation entre différents acteurs dont le nom figure sur le document. Ainsi les rapports de la Banque mondiale (Maingueneau 2002) donnent la liste des experts qui se sont réunis pour faire le texte.

Maingueneau thus identifies a class of discourses, which he calls "participations", displaying the contextual features of both participation and quotation. In them the encoder represents a larger authorship than that inscribed in an individual author: the encoding voice is intrinsically plural, the fruit of "participation". At the same time this participation is also a form of quotation or "citation" of the discourse produced by either a speech community, as happens with proverbs and sayings, or a community

of practice, as is the case of certain professional genres and of the discursive activities of international organizations. Here authorial responsibility is shared, and the encoding process is inherently collaborative, no matter who is invested with authorial responsibility for each document.

The reports published by the World Health Organization ascribe authorship to a variety of people and teams through the different editions. “Report of the Director-General”: thus reads the frontispiece to the 1998 issue of the report just below the subtitle — “Life in the 21st century. A vision for all.” This issue acknowledges the Director-General of the World Health Organization as the sole author of the WHO annual report. Authorship has always been collaborative, though responsibility for it is differently assigned in the earlier and later editions either to one person — the legal representative of WHO — or to a pool of experts, who are singled out one by one and introduced with name and surname. Indeed, starting from the 1999 edition, the texts are explicitly described as the fruit of collaborative work, whose authorship is ascribed to a number of people, both specialists and top members of the managing team of the UN agency for health. All writers, contributors, editors, translators, supervisors and even staff providing administrative support are mentioned individually in a special section at the beginning of each report, immediately after the indication of the organization’s address. Further details about members of working groups participating in the preparatory stages of the drafting process are provided either here or in the Acknowledgement section closing the 2000, 2001 and 2002 issues. However, final responsibility for authorship remains rather indeterminate and seems to fluctuate from one issue to the next. Indeed, the World Health Report for 1999 lists all contributors and collaborators, but does not ascribe authorial responsibility to anyone in particular. The same applies to the 2000, 2001, 2002, 2008 and 2010 editions, while the documents published in 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007 all place the World Health Organization in authorial position — before the title — on the first page following the frontispiece. That said, it is undeniable that WHO is implicitly recognized as the main agent in the collection of data, processing of information and drafting of texts making up each report. As a matter of fact, the frontispiece to every single edition bears the WHO logo. Further evidence of this implicit attribution of authorship is the disclaiming statement, which invariably follows the claim of copyright:

- (4) The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this publication, including tables and maps, do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the World Health Organization concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Dotted lines on maps represent approximate border lines for which there may not

yet be full agreement. The mention of specific companies or of certain manufacturers' products does not imply that they are endorsed or recommended by the World Health Organization in preference to others of a similar nature that are not mentioned. Errors and omissions excepted, the names of proprietary products are distinguished by initial capital letters.

The WHO Secretariat and the WHO itself are thus envisaged as carriers of authorial responsibility for the texts, though not for the expression of opinions on the legal status of countries or on controversial border questions; similarly, WHO denies endorsement of companies and their products, though they are mentioned in the reports.

As to the World Trade Organization, its *World Trade Report* assigns full authorial responsibility to the Secretariat, as is explicitly stated in the disclaimer, which follows the Acknowledgement section and repeats the same wording in each edition:

- (5) The World Trade Report and any opinions reflected therein are the sole responsibility of the WTO Secretariat. They do not purport to reflect the opinions or views of members of the WTO. The main authors of the Report also wish to exonerate those who have commented upon it from responsibility for any outstanding errors or omissions.

The *Foreword* invariably bears the signature of the Director-General, who represents the WTO and avows responsibility for the report, for the accountability of the information therein contained and for opinions therein expressed. Yet, ample participation, or – in Maingueneau's terms – “participation” in study design, research and drafting activities is always acknowledged and lavishly praised in the preceding Acknowledgement section.

The plural voice of the writing team is matched by the plural nature of the target audience, who in the case of the *World Health Reports* is classified into four layers, as indicated on a page of the WHO website which introduces the yet unwritten 2012 edition (< www.who.int/whr/en/index.html>):

- governments and policy-makers in the role of stewards for the countries they lead,
- donor agencies,
- researchers and academics,
- journalists and the general public.

The category of potential addressees of WHO's reports has from the first edition consisted in an indefinite number of stakeholders – governments, medical people, organizations for global development and private citizens. Ideally, the readership of all reports drafted by international organizations should coincide with the world's population. That is why the reports issued by UN agencies are published in the five official languages of the United Nations. For the same reason the reports drafted in

the 1990s and later have been published on the Worldwide Web as well as in print. Still for the same reason WHO's reports, though providing details about ownership and copyrights, challenge stakeholders to send in requests for permission to reproduce the text, which WHO will be very happy to grant:

- (6) The World Health Organization welcomes requests for permission to reproduce or translate its publications, in part or in full. Applications and enquiries should be addressed to the Office of Publications, World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland, which will be glad to provide the latest information on any changes made to the text, plans for new editions, and reprints and translations already available.

The information in FAO's *State of Food Insecurity*, starting from the second edition, published in 2000, can be freely circulated for all purposes except commercial ones, as declared below the title of the report, on the page opening with details about the publisher and the disclaimer:

- (7) All rights reserved. Reproduction and dissemination of material in this information product for educational or other non-commercial purposes are authorized without any prior written permission from the copyright holders provided the source is fully acknowledged.

Differently, the World Trade Organization indicates the WTO as publisher immediately after the symbol for copyrights, but does not mention the question of copyrights. However, either at the beginning or at the end of each document details are provided as to the availability of a printed copy and of a French and Spanish version of the text. Address, fax and telephone number of the WTO's publishing division are also provided, alongside with e-mail address and special website page in case any reader may wish to contact the organization's staff for additional information on the WTO's publications. The latest editions (2010 and 2011) also provide three schematic sections which briefly explain the purpose and structure of the text and again indicate how to contact the publishing division for further information:

- (8) What is the World Trade Report?
The World Trade Report is an annual publication that aims to deepen understanding about trends in trade, trade policy issues and the multilateral trading system.
Using this report
The 2011 World Trade Report is split into two main parts. The first is a brief summary of the trade situation in 2010.
The second part focuses on the special theme of preferential trade agreements.
Find out more
Website: www.wto.org
General enquiries:
enquiries@wto.org

2.2. Communicative purpose

Raising awareness and generating a sense of commitment in the cause for universal welfare are the two communicative purposes lying at the root of the encoding process of any of these reports. Indeed, these texts all pursue the fundamental objectives of providing information and spurring to action. With this aim on mind, WHO and the WTO have opened up participation in the drafting process to what used to be the merely receptive pole of the encoding / decoding opposition. This opposition has actually evolved into a continuum along which the two organizations provisionally allocate roles. The WTO has recently provided a *World Trade Report Forum* in which surfers can have their say by submitting comment and feedback on issues which are going to be dealt with in the still unpublished edition of the *World Trade Report*. As to the World Health Organization, its website has lately introduced a special section within the *publications* area, offering readers the opportunity to become co-authors of the next report by sending in their suggestions for a title and real life stories demonstrating the role of research in the improvement of public health, which will be the topic of the report. In this way the polarization of the participation framework will be shaded into a set of intermediate positions along a cline which will admit the possibility of mutual exchange, with a view to raising awareness and generating commitment both in local communities and on a global scale. The special section on WHO's website page which invites surfers to submit their suggestions also provides a definition of the communicative purpose of *World Health Reports*, as well as an explicit indication of the potential addressees:

- (9) The main purpose of the report is to provide policymakers, donor agencies, international organizations and others with the information they need to help them make appropriate policy and funding decisions. However, the report is also designed to be accessible to a wider audience, such as universities, journalists and the public at large. It is expected that anyone, with a professional or personal interest in international and personal health issues, will be able to read and make use of it.

The purpose of the reports is well in accord with the WHO's function of "shaping the research agenda and stimulating the generation, translation and dissemination of valuable knowledge" (<http://www.who.int>). Similar definitions of communicative purpose and targeted audience are provided by both FAO and the WTO for their publications. The definitions are embedded in the texts themselves:

- (10) The State of Food Insecurity in the World raises awareness about global hunger issues, discusses underlying causes of hunger and malnutrition and monitors progress towards hunger reduction targets established at the 1996 World Food Summit and the Millennium Summit. The

publication is targeted at a wide audience, including policy-makers, international organizations, academic institutions and the general public with an interest in linkages between food security and human and economic development. (*The State of Food Insecurity* 2011)

- (11) The World Trade Report is a new annual publication produced by the WTO Secretariat. Each year, the WTR will explore trends in world trade and highlight important issues in the world trading system. In addition to monitoring and interpreting trade developments, the Report seeks to deepen public understanding of pressing policy issues. The WTR does not pretend to provide comprehensive answers to complex and many-sided questions subject to continuing debate among governments and their constituencies. Rather, by explaining the origin of issues and offering an analytical framework within which to address them, the WTR aims to contribute to more informed discussion and a better appreciation of the options available to address policy challenges. (*World Trade Report* 2003)

Raising “awareness” and deepening “public understanding” are the alleged objective which both organizations aim to achieve through the publication of *The State of Food Insecurity* and the *World Trade Report*. A close reading of the texts containing this statement of objectives reveals an interesting difference in the role played by policy-making in the definition of communicative purpose. While *The World Health Report* and *The State of Food Insecurity* envisage policy-makers as members of the targeted audience, the *World Trade Report* features “informed discussion” and full competence in taking political decisions as its fundamental aim. Thus, although the human agents of those decisions are not mentioned, they are conjured up by the representation of their activity as one that may be improved by the discursive practices of the WTO.

That said on declared purposes, there is the whole area of institutional aims tacitly pursued by international organizations through their discursive activities, among which report writing undoubtedly takes a leading role. As a matter of fact, the thematic reports drafted on a roughly annual basis by FAO, WHO and the WTO represent an interesting object of investigation due to the multiplicity of purposes they serve and to the complexity of the participation framework they envisage. The next chapter will thus introduce some general considerations on the generation of self-legitimizing discourse by organizations whose first and foremost need is to establish consensus around their activity. A brief review of the existing literature on institutional reporting will follow.

Chapter II

Consensus-making and self-legitimization in the discourse of international organizations

1. Discourse analysis and institutional communication

Since the 1960s a new approach has been developing in the study of linguistic products, which have gradually come to be regarded as situated communicative events to be analyzed in their contextual dimension as well as in their linguistic and textual structure. Maingueneau subtly points out that the rise of what is now universally known as “discourse analysis” stems from the convergence of several strains of research interests in the 1960s, which are hard to trace and whose hierarchy is difficult to establish, but which have nonetheless strongly determined the emergence of a multidimensional perspective. The interdisciplinary nature of discourse analysis responds to the need to shed light from various angles on what is clearly a many-faceted object of research, that is to say, discourse. Maingueneau poignantly describes the role that various disciplines within the vast domain of human studies play in this attempt to unravel the mysteries of discourse (Maingueneau 2005: 65):

L'analyse du discours n'est pas non plus venue combler un manque en pointillés dans la linguistique du système, comme si à Saussure on avait ajouté Bakhtine, à une linguistique de « langue » une linguistique de la « parole ». Certes, elle a un lien privilégié avec les sciences du langage, dont elle relève – du moins dans la conception qui prévaut communément, et particulièrement en France – mais son développement implique non seulement une extension de la linguistique, mais aussi une reconfiguration de l'ensemble du savoir. On notera d'ailleurs que ses grands inspirateurs des années 60 ne sont que pour une part des linguistes. On y trouve aussi des anthropologues (Hymes, ...), des sociologues (Garfinkel, Sacks...), mais aussi des philosophes sociaux de linguistique (Pêcheux) ou non (Foucault).

It is not simply a shift from a concern with usage to a study of the actual use of language in texts which accomplish their communicative function and fulfill their meaning potential in their context of production and reception. Discourse analytical studies reveal a true change in attitude towards that complex phenomenon, verbal communication, which is shaped by so many factors and is so variable that it definitely escapes all possibility of discrete analysis. Only the active collaboration of several human scientists may promote an in-depth understanding of discourse in all its linguistic, pragmatic, sociological and ethnographic implications.

Discourse is an extremely dense area of human activity as it both expresses and substantiates social change (Fairclough 1993). It is a means of self-legitimization and in a number of domains – like the religious and the philosophical, the literary and the institutional – establishes its role and status through its self-constituting power (Cossutta / Maingueneau 1995: 112-113):

La prétention attachée au statut de discours constituant, c'est de fonder et de n'être pas fondé. [...] il est dans la nature de ces derniers de dénier cette interaction ou de prétendre la soumettre à des principes. Les discours constituants mettent en oeuvre une même fonction dans la production symbolique d'une société [...] Dans l'état actuel de notre réflexion sont constituants essentiellement les discours religieux, scientifique, philosophique, littéraire, juridique. [...] Ces discours constituants donnent sens aux actes de la collectivité, ils sont les garants des multiples genres de discours.

Through discourse social action is structured, which in turn shapes the structures and forms of communication, notably the emergence and handling of discourse genres, which are typified and purpose-oriented discursive events, as Yates and Orlikowski indicate (Orlikowski / Yates 1992: 300):

[...] genres can be viewed as social institutions that both shape and are shaped by individuals' communicative actions. By situating genres within processes of organizational structuration, the proposed framework captures the continuing interaction between human communicative action and the institutionalized communicative practices of groups, organizations, and societies.

As to the structuring power of discourse, with special reference to the discourse of organizations, Bargiela-Chiappini emphasizes the possibility for language to construct as well as describe social reality (Bargiela-Chiappini 2004: 7):

In this section I look at the ontological status of discourse and I argue that the potentialities of the discourse analytic approach to organization(s) is more fully realized where discourse is granted ontological primacy. The importance of discourse in the sociolinguistic approaches mentioned so far varies on an imaginary continuum, at one end of which discourse appears as “descriptive” and at the other end as “generative”.

Referring to what she terms the “engagement continuum”, discourse may position itself on a cline where “descriptive” and “generative” are the extremes, while “interpretive”, “constitutive” and “transformative” define an ever increasing degree of moulding power which discourse may exert on social reality. Norman Fairclough, one of the main theorizers of discourse as a major factor for social change, thus describes the impact which discourse has on the shaping and reshaping of social structures (Fairclough 1993: 63-64):

[...] discourse is a mode of action, one form in which people may act upon the world and especially upon each other, as well as a mode of representation. [...] there is a dialectical relationship between discourse and social structure [...]. This is the import of Foucault's discussion of the discursive formation of objects, subjects and concepts. Discourse contributes to the constitution of all those dimensions of social structure which directly or indirectly shape and constrain it: its own norms and conventions, as well as the relations, identities and institutions which lie behind them. Discourse is a practice not just of representing the world, but of signifying the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning.

In critical discourse analytical terms Fairclough recasts Foucault's fundamental intuition that discursive practices shape the "objects" they describe through the organizing action of human language on the world of reality, which in turn fulfils man's symbolic potential. Discourse should therefore be handled as a practice which models reality rather than a mere system of signs (Foucault 1969: 67):

[Il ne faut pas] traiter les discours comme des ensembles de signes (d'éléments signifiants renvoyant à des contenus ou à des représentations) mais comme des pratiques qui forment systématiquement les objets dont ils parlent. Certes, les discours sont faits de signes; mais ce qu'ils font, c'est plus que d'utiliser ces signes pour désigner des choses. C'est ce plus, qui les rend irréductibles à la langue et à la parole. C'est ce "plus" qu'il faut faire apparaître et qu'il faut décrire.

Fairclough explicitly recognizes his indebtedness to Foucault for "two major theoretical insights about discourse" (Fairclough 1993: 39-40):

The first is a constitutive view of discourse, which involves seeing discourse as actively constituting or constructing society on various dimensions: discourse constitutes the objects of knowledge, social subjects and forms of "self", social relationships, and conceptual frameworks. The second is an emphasis on the interdependency of the discourse practices of a society or institution: texts always draw upon and transform other contemporary and historically prior texts (a property commonly referred to as the "intertextuality" of texts [...]), and any given type of discourse practice is generated out of a combination of others

The second insight Fairclough ascribes to Foucault lies at the heart of any discursive activity, irrespective of the setting or domain. It is already envisaged by Kathleen Jamieson (Jamieson 1975: 406) in her analysis of antecedent genres as "decisively formative" in the shaping and handling of discourse:

In rhetorical transactions too, the past may abide as a living presence. Indeed, even where immediate circumstance may seem clearly to solicit a certain form of rhetorical response, it is sometimes a different, even incompatible form that comes, through stubborn habituation, to rhetorical expression. [...] it is sometimes rhetorical genres and not rhetorical situations that are decisively formative. [...] rhetors do perceive unprecedented situations through antecedent genres [...] which are capable of imposing powerful constraints.

At any given time, discourse is the result of an artful negotiation between tradition and innovation, past and present, typified models and apparently idiosyncratic creations, whereby diverse rhetorical conventions coalesce into unexpected combinations. Interdiscursivity is an inexhaustible source of the production and reproduction of discourse as it allows the exploitation of existing discursive resources in unprecedented situations or in emerging settings. This has happened with international organizations such as the United Nations and its various agencies, which have been promoting a considerable amount of discursive activities, both through the oral and written medium, on a number of topics and in a number of genres. One of the research questions underlying this dissertation is whether a typical discursive product generated by three international organizations may be regarded as the fruit of an interdiscursive practice consisting in drawing on different fields of discourse (Halliday 1978:142-145) in order to establish a fairly original register, characterized by a distinctive tenor and mode of discourse. The dynamism between modelling routines and new practices engenders discursive creativity and is a formidable instrument of self-legitimization for institutions whose recent foundation excludes the possibility of a firm anchorage in consolidated traditions, both in the area of discourse production and in the generation of social practices. It is this dialectics between expected patterns and innovative solutions, between a well-established rhetorical tradition and a purpose-oriented handling of forms, that legitimizes and organizes social action in such institutional settings as international organizations. The structuring and legitimizing potential of typified forms of discourse like genres and genre systems is envisaged by Yates and Orlikowski in their study on the structuring of interaction through communicative norms (Orlikowski / Yates 2002: 13):

Genre systems are important ways of organizing the social, structural, temporal, and spatial dimensions of interaction [...] A genre established within a particular community serves as an institutionalized template for social interaction -- an organizing structure -- that influences the ongoing communicative action of members through their use of it within and across their community.

The legitimizing and organizing power of discourse and its fundamental role in sense making both within organizations and in their relationship to the outside world is recognized by Cohen, Musson and Tietze as essential for any in-depth understanding of the way organizations justify their existence and keep themselves busy with some crucial activity (Cohen / Musson / Tietze 2003: 171):

Understanding that language does things is the first step in understanding meaning making: how meaning making happens, and why certain meanings are made in certain circumstances is central to understanding how organizations work.

This insight applies to both corporate and institutional entities. International organizations with philanthropic as well as broadly political purposes like the United Nations and its specialized agencies – FAO and WHO among others – need to justify their activity by “establishing credentials” (Bhatia 1993) and so do organizations like WTO, whose activity clearly serves the interests of many of the members – allegedly all of them – and are therefore perhaps less in need of a self-legitimizing strategy. Credentials are always established discursively through the many public relations and public diplomacy initiatives which are being increasingly implemented by these social-political bodies and which range from informative brochures to the organization’s website portal, from book-format publications to periodical reports drafted on a number of issues and published both in print and on the Web. This burgeoning wealth of written texts, encoded either in traditionally linear or in hypertextual form as website pages or online publications with links to related studies testifies to the need of international institutions to both raise awareness about world-scale problems and establish an unquestionable claim to the handling of these problems. In other words, these organizations attempt to place themselves on the international scene as legitimate mediators in issues of great momentum, such as the phasing out of malnutrition and starvation, the achievement of health for all and the consolidation of global trade rules benefiting the international community – or at least its most powerful members. The legitimization being aimed at is achieved through an intrinsically discursive process of reputation building. Systems of genres have thus sprouted to accompany the proliferation of legal texts, such as charters, conventions, protocols and treaties and to monitor the implementation of the principles and regulations established in normative texts. These genres share similar, though not identical, purposes in that they all aim to disseminate valuable knowledge, focusing on different scales – from global questions to national and regional problems – while using the same channels as they almost invariably appear both in print and on the Internet. One of these genres, that of the periodical report elaborated by international organizations, is discussed in this work. Although discourse analysis is already a well-established fifty-year-old discipline, it has so far only marginally explored this area of institutional discourse. There have been extremely interesting studies of a predominantly ethnographic nature on oral interaction within institutional – medical and other professional – settings (Roberts / Sarangi 1999) and on the mass of oral discourse produced by such international institutions as the European Union (Krzyżanowski 2011), but very few studies have delved into the linguistic and discursive patterns of an ever increasing amount of written texts produced by international organizations.

2. “Sense and nonsense” in the discourse of international organizations

Gilbert Rist is one of the most outstanding representatives of a line of discourse analytical studies which are firmly grounded in the research carried out by social and political scientists. His exploration into the rhetorical depths of institutional discourse authored by the Secretariat of the United Nations and other intergovernmental bodies provides a useful key to the interpretation of the genre of institutional reports. His studies, however, like those of the other analysts – mostly political scientists and economists – featuring in his collection of essays (Rist 2002)¹, only examine one text or even a fraction of a text. The objection may consequently be that the discourse sample under analysis is not representative of the genre. In particular, Rist studies the *Foreword to the World development report 1999/2000 - entering the 21st century: the changing development landscape*, published by the World Bank in 2000 (Rist 2002b). It would be interesting to apply the interpreting categories deployed by Rist and the other analysts to a considerably larger corpus with a view to verifying Rist’s hypothesis that the institutional discourse produced by international organizations is an artificial construct resulting from a rhetorical activity which is devoid of meaningful significance. This view is shared by all the authors featuring in Rist’s book, which bears a revealing title: *Les mots du pouvoir. Sens et non sens de la rhétorique internationale*. The discourse of international organizations is seen as an emanation of the power wielded by the great economic and political entities which dominate the global scene. It is an expression of their monopoly over means of persuasion: it is both a manifestation and an instrument of their cultural hegemony. Its peculiar poverty in sense is covered by the extremely rich attire of rhetorical embellishments which on closer examination reveal their repetitiveness and predictability as they mainly consist in stock metaphors and typified collocational choices. Rist describes the “expert discourse” of intergovernmental bodies as extremely predictable and formulaic both in its overall textual structure and in its micro-linguistic features – primarily in the choice of a number of phrases and association of phrases (Rist 2002a: 11):

J’appellerai ici «style formulaire» l’ensemble des relations syntagmatiques nominales, verbales et narratives que l’on peut identifier dans le «discours expert», c’est à dire le fait que, de manière générale, la présence d’un terme suppose la coprésence d’un autre, les deux formant

¹ All the studies mentioned in this section are chapters in the volume edited by Rist (Rist 2002), which is one of the very few explorations, from an ethnographic as well as linguistic point of view, of the institutional discourse produced in the written medium by international organizations.

alors une unité indissociable, mais aussi l'existence de plusieurs énoncés narratifs qui, en quelque sorte, «s'appellent» les uns les autres, entraînant ainsi la prévisibilité du discours. Même si ce style formulaire varie d'une institution à l'autre puisque chacune cherche à imprimer sa marque sur les discours qu'elle produit, il reste néanmoins un grand nombre de traits communs dans l'usage de formules stéréotypées.

Rist analyzes the *Foreword* to the *World development report 1999/2000* in terms of the typical institutional text organized as a fairy tale narrative revolving round a challenge. The narrative features an organization – in this case the World Bank – or an international working group as striving hard to defeat the antagonist (extreme poverty, commercial isolation, undernourishment, poor sanitary conditions, etc.) in what metaphorically bears the military traits of a battle or struggle. No matter which organization produces the report – whether the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, the United Nations or one of its Agencies – the discourse produced invariably abounds in such noun phrases as “challenge”, “poverty eradication”, “battle/struggle against...”, “progress”, “advances” and “setbacks”. Those noun phrases are often coupled with a fixed verb, with adjectives and/or prepositional phrases; so for example “advances” are “unprecedented”, “challenges” must be “faced”, “technology” is “in the service of development”, etc. (Rist 2002a: 11). Through the reproduction of a fairly typified set of narrative sequences which resemble those of the fairy story and through the lavish use of predictable co-occurrences of phrases, a typical discursive pattern is established, which endows the language of institutional reports with the features of a language for specific purposes (LSP) in its full right, breaking across the boundaries between national diatopic varieties. As Maingueneau put it (Maingueneau 2002: 129), these varieties converge into the code used by an “interlinguistic discourse community” which cuts across the boundaries between individual speech communities, namely the staff working for international organizations, who allegedly write reports for a global readership, but in fact only address other experts within their own discourse community:

Les rapports des organisations internationales sont écrits dans un idiome qui fonctionne de manière q'on pourrait dire restreinte, en n'exploitant qu'un nombre limité de ses possibilités syntaxiques et lexicales, projetant ainsi la figure d'un énonciateur «sur la réserve», qui a expulsé de lui sa singularité. Mais cela n'est évidemment que la pretention attaché à ce discours; pour le monde extérieur ce code langagier est facilement identifiable comme un discours de spécialité parmi bien d'autres: le français (l'anglais, le chinois, le russe...) des organisations internationales. [...] Ces communautés apparaissent comme des lieux dans lesquels les discours sont produits à travers les mêmes genres; la seule variable apparente semble alors être la langue utilisée.

Maingueneau then goes on to tackle the question of whether the discursive activities enacted by international organizations represent a self-constituting discourse (Maingueneau / Cossutta 1995), that is to say a discourse which claims to found other discourses, without being itself founded by any discursive authority:

Les discours constituants mettent en oeuvre une même fonction dans la production symbolique d'une société, une fonction que nous pourrions dire d'archéon. [...] L'archéon associe ainsi intimement le travail de foundation dans et par le discours, la détermination d'un lieu associé à un corps d'énonciateurs consacrés et une élaboration de la mémoire. Dans l'état actuel de notre réflexion sont constituants essentiellement les discours religieux, scientifique, philosophique, littéraire, juridique. Le discours politique nous semble opérer sur un plan différent, construisant des configurations mouvantes à la confluence des discours constituants, sur lesquels il s'appuie, et les multiples strates de topoï d'une collectivité. Ces discours constituants donnent sens aux actes de la collectivité, ils sont les garants des multiples genres de discours.

His conclusion is that the discourse generated by international organizations is not qualified to aspire to the status of self-constituting discourse since it is generated by no absolute entity and can only pretend to address a universal audience. It is rather a fake of self-constituting discourse, enacted by institutions whose feeling of omnipotence feeds on the discursive monopoly they wield (Maingueneau 2002: 130):

Pour qu'il s'agisse de discours constituant, il faudrait qu'ils ne relevant pas du discours politique, au sens habituel du terme. Le discours politique, en effet, n'est pas un discours constituant, mais un discours qui est médiateur entre les discours constituants et la doxa, ce qui explique les rapports très ambigus qu'il ne peut manquer d'entretenir avec les médias, aujourd'hui comme à l'époque de la démocratie grecque. Chaque positionnement dans le champ politique s'oppose à ses concurrents en s'appuyant, en fonction de son identité, sur tels ou tels discours constituants.

The discursive practices enacted by international organizations do not share in the intrinsic dialectical nature of political discourse as they never argumentatively face other discursive practices in the same field; on the contrary, this variety of institutional discourse enjoys what Maingueneau calls "un monopole énonciatif" (Maingueneau 2002: 130):

Il implique une scène d'énonciation très remarquable, dans laquelle c'est l'Humanité représentée par une institution qui s'adresse aux hommes, appréhendés dans leur multiplicité. Ce discours qui prétend dire l'Universel par la bouche d'un Énonciateur universel peut se croire en droit d'excéder les limites du politique.

Beyond its pretences of representativeness and finality, however, this discourse does not show the typical traits of self-constituting discourses because of a lack of real authoritativeness of the encoder as well as a shortage of historical decoders, since the

actual readership is much more limited than the imagined global audience of the reports and other publications issued by intergovernmental bodies. Indeed, these texts provide guidelines for institutional staff working on ideology-driven projects and are the result of careful strategies of highly diplomatic mediation between different positions. Those painstaking negotiations are kept secret so as not to impair the official image of Mouthpiece of Universal Truth which is attached to international organizations, thus preserving the sacred aura of supreme authority surrounding the position of Author, which is ascribed to a transcendent institution, while in actual fact it resides with a team of historically determined flesh-and-blood human experts (Maingueneau 2002: 131-132).

According to Perrot (Perrot 2002) the main feature of the discourse elaborated by international organizations in their reports is its poverty in sense. Aspiring to the status of consensus-making language, this variety of institutional discourse discards all meaningful line of reasoning. Actually, it discards all argumentation and never delves into agency or into the causes of phenomena; rather, it limits itself to a superficial pointing to some self-evident facts, embellishing its pseudo-analysis with tables, graphics, maps and statistical updates aiming to make the texts look like the fruit of expert study and of the careful collection and interpretation of objective data. The language developed by international organizations for their reports accomplishes an essentially performative function, that of magically enacting the propositions envisaged in it (Perrot 2002: 64):

Tout se passe comme si déclarer, dire, était mieux que de ne rien dire, et que finalement, dans ces cas-là, dire équivaut à à accomplir. L'acte ne sera alors «que»de langage, la langue comme «système de suppléance» se sera substituée à l'action. [...] En autres termes, tout se passe comme si l'effet d'énonciation se substituait à l'action elle même, considéré comme réalisée parce que énoncée.

Founding his evaluation on the reading of the report jointly drafted by the United Nations, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in 2000, bearing the title *A Better World for All: Progress towards the international development goals*, Perrot identifies the main traits of this variety of institutional discourse with the typical features of the “wooden language” of the former Soviet Union and of all totalitarian regimes, a stereotyped language feeding on its own repetitiveness, characterized by a formulaic style in which the supreme purpose of self-reproduction is achieved through an appalling void of sense, through the systematic choice of inanimate subjects – often abstractions – and through a marked preference for the agentless passive voice. This discourse subtly alternates the transparent and clear with the fluid and vague, abounding as it does in objective factfiles on the one hand and on the

other in words and phrases whose meaning is extremely difficult to define and can indeed be easily bent to create consensus. Such phrases as “international community”, “progress”, “lasting development”, “authentic partnership”, “effective use of resources”, “a better world for all” sound nice and universally appealing, designed as they are to please all expectations, provided these expectations are only of a vaguely diplomatic nature and renounce all hope of ever producing any real change.

Typically, “challenges” feature as the antagonist, which is disembodied and turned into an abstract entity with no roots and no past. Not only is the indication of agents and of causal links systematically avoided, texts also teem with comparative forms in which the second term of comparison is regularly omitted. Much of what is ordinarily spelt out in communication is here entrusted with the area of implicit meaning with a view to reducing the questionability of positions which are never fully declared and are often even disguised as undebatable presuppositions (Degano 2008: 115-160). The discourse elaborated by the UN and its agencies is represented by Perrot as a self-referential language marked by a dissociation between the signifier and the signified, a language in which all reference to the external world has been effaced and linguistic structures tautologically flatten reality by defining problematic concepts through an emphatic repetition of the same. In this discourse the imagined audience is mankind at large, but no real interlocutor in flesh and blood is envisaged and the “other” is totally ignored (Perrot 2002: 56-57):

Un texte mondial s'adresse à tous. Le monde devrait donc être meilleur pour tous: tous, c'est qui? [...] Que serait un monde meilleur, et meilleur que quoi, par rapport à quoi, en quoi et pour qui? Aucune de ces questions ne se pose lorsque l'on parle d'un seul monde, car la complexité est évacuée, et d'abord celle qui relève des avis divers et divergents des premiers concernés. Mais qui est concerné? Tout le monde «en bloc», ou tous «les pauvres» amalgamés dans une même catégorie, ceux qui ont été homogénéisés à l'intérieur de la catégorie «dollar»? [...] Le texte oscille entre un monde meilleur pour les pauvres et un monde meilleur pour tous. De toute façon, les objectifs qui définissent l'augmentation de la qualité de vie sont établis selon les critères fixés par les organisations internationales.

The criteria identified by international organizations as indicators of the quality of life are the core values of a liberal society aiming at the highest degree of economic and commercial freedom and pursuing the unquestioned supreme goal of global economic growth. By confining the reasons for the essentially political choices lying at the root of the document under analysis to the area of presuppositions and assumed doxa, the painstaking task of arguing in favour of a debatable tenet is avoided. Perrot shares Rist's belief that this discourse carries statements, but no argumentation as they agree that the real readership is no such thing as a global one and only consists in members of the organizations themselves, who do not really need to be persuaded to take any

decision whatsoever, apart from selecting ways to raise funds. Consequently, most of these texts despite all declared purposes are in fact instructions to internal staff and, partly, to policy-makers and potential donors to find ways of financing projects for the prospected “better world for all”.

Differently from many other social and political scientists contributing to Rist’s collection of studies on the reports published by international organizations, Francine Mestrum covers a considerable number of texts and traces a few recurrent features in institutional discourse (Mestrum 2002). Similarly to Rist, she finds that the founding assumption of this discourse is the acceptance of a global liberal market as an unchangeable fact, an unchallengeable *datum* which no political choice, either of national states or of intergovernmental bodies, can ever dream of modifying. This fact is described in institutional reports in terms of a natural phenomenon which escapes all human control, like storms and hurricanes. Globalization is often depicted as a surging sea, or a wind whose nature is still unclear – whether that of a mild breeze or of a devastating cyclone – as turbulence on a flight or a snowstorm. Economy, which used to be a keyword in post-war discourse on development, has disappeared from texts on globalization, thus becoming de-problematized and ticked off the list of possible objects of debate. Once globalization has been established as a phenomenon escaping all human control, the only task residing with national and international bodies remains that of guiding the inevitable global market towards a condition in which disparities are eased and the poor are helped to leave that dangerous demarcation line separating them from the non-poor: one (according to some analysts two) dollar per day. Stewardship is the only possible function which is entrusted to national governments in their management of economic and social forces. Development is deterministically seen as the consequence of growth, which is in its turn understood as the result of a global battle against poverty. The discourse of international organizations is therefore rich in military metaphors converging on the creation of a common objective which should ideally unite local, national and international interests in a supreme shared effort for poverty eradication on a global scale. This goal never implies any intrusion on the part of individual governments or of intergovernmental bodies into the economic laws at work in society. On the contrary, those laws are represented as totally independent of political decisions, particularly of paternalistic attempts to bend the natural course of economic events. Consequently, the task of national states and of the international community is that of fostering participation in the free market, renouncing all hope to change it and withdrawing from the scene of public intervention. The new social philosophy endorsed by international organizations which surfaces in their reports aims to let all countries and individuals participate in the market, and help them activate those

primary social resources which can be nursed and nurtured only by communities, the so-called “social capital”. This concept, which was embraced by the World Bank in the late 90s, has turned into one of the core values of the international community, which has since then done all that is in its power to encourage local and national groups to take care of themselves.

Another analyst who has examined the effects of the endorsement of the much-cherished principle of social capital by the World Bank is Pierre Englebert, who shows how rash that institution was to welcome the concept as soon as it was developed at the end of the last millennium, even before it became consolidated and in spite of many doubts being raised on its validity (Englebert 2002). The reason he gives for this enthusiastic acceptance, which curiously contrasts the Bank’s tradition of cautious approaches and longstanding research on controversial questions, is that the World Bank was only too willing to raise the banner of social capital as it relieved the institution from the responsibility for failure in boosting governmental reform of public sectors and the implementation of structural reform projects. An additional reason may be that the promotion of social capital requires intervention on the part of the international community which is not of an economic nature only; rather, it primarily consists in a strenuous re-building effort after the end of the Cold War. This effort would allow for ampler meddling with national affairs and would consequently justify the World Bank’s wish to implement policies of cultural expansionism. Yet the principle of social capital is far from being universally accepted in the social and political sciences. There are rather two main versions of this theory, the first emphasizing the institutional effects that trust and community life exert on governance and economic performance (Putnam 1993), while the second highlights the economic impact of relations based on trust, that is to say the building up of positive transactional externalities (Coleman 1990). The dominant definition of social capital ignores any institutional intermediary and focuses on a network of familial and community-founding relationships which facilitate educational success, economic activity, technical innovation and productivity by lowering transactional costs through a reduction in information asymmetries and the consolidation of anti-opportunistic mutual norms. Social capital often features as a by-product of organizational activities originating with private entities though generating societal links and an ability to act reciprocally and collectively. Two major objections, however, have been raised against this notion. One (Englebert 2002) questions causal relationships, since it is not at all proven that social capital represents the origin and foundation of trust-based communities: it may well be the consequence of community life anchored on prevalent ties of mutual aid and support. The second objection, arising from the awareness that there are also trust-based criminal communities

(Bayart / Ellis /Hibou 1999), is simplistically dismissed by pointing to the negative nature of the social capital generated by those communities: in other words, there is “good” and “bad” social capital as there are good and bad trust-based communities. These objections are not the only obstacle on the way to a unanimous acceptance of the notion of social capital: a further difficulty is the looseness of the definition, pivoting on such vague concepts as trust and community life and tautologically equating causes and effects. The two reasons provided by Englebort to account for the uncritical appropriation of the principle of social capital by the World Bank are well in accord with the motives Mestrum sees at work behind the discursive practices of the UN and its agencies: self-legitimazation and self-reproduction. Indeed, the main communicative purpose of the rich and diversified discourse production of intergovernmental bodies may be read through the superstructure of declarations, statements of principles and descriptions of mandates, published in brochure format as well as on the Worldwide Web. All these texts seem to spring from unacknowledged motives lying deeper than the declared double purpose of disseminating valuable knowledge and statistical updates about problematic questions and of suggesting viable solutions to those problems. The driving forces at work in the discursive practices of international organizations are identified by both Englebort and Mestrum as a double attempt to justify failure to implement projects on the one hand and on the other to assert the beneficial nature of each organization’s activities and its duty to export its own models of development into the remotest areas of the globe. Thus the very existence of international organizations is legitimized as is their unconditional belief in the positive effects of economic growth and in the deterministic nature of development. Intervention policies in macro-economic terms are also justified in the name of that belief, as is a retreat from any attempt to guide national political choices in economic matters, which would be anathema to intergovernmental bodies whose mandate emphatically excludes all possibility of political intrusion into national affairs.

A similar view is shared by Frédéric Lapeyre (Lapeyre 2002), who has analyzed the metamorphosis of discourse on development in the course of the 1990s and early 2000s and the fate of the notion of conflict, which seems doomed to disappear as the more palatable concepts of “appropriation”, “participation”, “strengthening of capacities”, “inclusion” “social capital” and “social cohesion” triumphantly access the discursive scene of international organizations. Social consensus, which is depicted as the foundation of social change and social reforms, hovers over their discursive practices with the intent of eliminating any controversial question and reinforcing the almightiness of intergovernmental bodies in their attempt to establish a harmonious world order, one in which all social, economic and political

forces will contribute to the smoothing of differences and the wearing down of contrasts. The process of development is in itself a destabilizing one, marked as it is by uncertainties and ruptures; it is a process which constantly questions existing hierarchies and regulations. That is why in the representation of international organizations the concept of development needs a preliminary acceptance and support on the part of global stakeholders, who must be won over to the cause of a soft accommodating plan for a world without poverty through the validation of a consensus-making policy on a planetary scale. Thus any hint at potential conflicts must be avoided and cooperation must be represented as the indispensable ingredient of all projects for development. That is why the World Bank and, more generally, intergovernmental bodies have worked out a hegemonic discourse on development which rests on two essential pillars: on the one hand the creation of an economic environment which may favour investments and growth, on the other hand the so-called empowerment of the poor, who should be placed in a position to profit from economic growth and share in the benefits of growing globalization. This discourse is dominated by what the World Bank describes as a poor-friendly growth, one in which investments on education and vocational training, the improvement of health services and the promotion of social capital act as key factors in the liberation of the poor in terms of their participation in the advantages of a neo-liberal economy. In this way the once common view of development as the fruit of a redistributive effort is dangerously vanquished through the adoption of a dominant discourse indicting egalitarianism as the main cause of backwardness (Lapeyre 2002: 108-109):

Le conflit est une fois encore évacué au nom du bien commun et les forces porteuses de justice sociale sont présentées comme mettant en péril l'objectif de réduction de la pauvreté. L'attaque contre les opposants au caractère inégalitaire de la mondialisation néo-libérale se fait à travers l'opposition entre l'intérêt des pauvres et les revendications de ces mouvements «anti-mondialistes» [...]. Cette dissociation entre lutte contre la pauvreté et réduction des inégalités montre une totale cécité des garants de l'ordre mondial quant à l'ampleur et la nature de la crise de légitimité que le projet de mondialisation néo-libérale doit affronter.

This model of a steady global growth benefiting both rich and poor in the wealth it brings to the former and the means for self-subsistence it provides for the latter, raises perplexities in more than one analyst. These perplexities account for the urgent need felt by the international guardians of neo-liberalism to legitimize their activities through the rampant enforcement of their hegemonic discursive policies. Thus, in order to reaffirm the commitment of the World Bank in favour of participatory practices involving the poor in the process of their own liberation, the report drawn by the Bank in 2000 – *World development report 2000/2001 - attacking poverty* – emphasizes the organization's will to encourage the poor to have their say in what

features primarily as a battle for their own well-being. More than 60,000 people living in poverty in about 60 countries have been interviewed and quotations from those interviews are interspersed in the report, seasoning it with a flavour of democratic consultation and embellishing it with a make-up of participatory discursive practices, which, however, in Lapeyre's words "float on the surface of the text, without ever impregnating it". Since participation and social inclusion represent the basis for a "comprehensive development framework", all form or fake of consultation and collaborative activity must be promoted, at least discursively. Whether the discursive practice is here capable of enacting social change (Fairclough 1993) or remains within that area of human communication which never crosses the border between representing and doing, is a debatable question. At all events, in Lapeyre's opinion it is only a make-believe of participation that is at play with the World Bank and other organizations, aiming to defeat opposition and thus gain universal consensus and applause, with a consequent consolidation of the neo-liberal tenets of economic growth and irreversible development. Governmental and intergovernmental bodies as well as multinational corporations all suffer from a growing mistrust in the face of their policies. That is why they need to legitimize their activity, in some cases their very existence. For the same reason, corporations have rapidly recognized the crucial role of corporate social responsibility (Lapeyre 2002: 115):

Nous sommes bien en présence d'un investissement stratégique –principalement en communication – au coeur de la stratégie commerciale des entreprises afin de préserver le processus d'une accumulation des conflits qui pourrait le perturber. La supercherie de ce discours en termes de responsabilité sociale des entreprises est de postuler que «les entreprises décident de leur propre initiative de contribuer à améliorer la société et rendre plus propre l'environnement». En réalité, ce discours est purement défensif et la responsabilité sociale de l'entreprise n'a de sens dans la logique du capital que pour autant qu'elle soit considérée comme un investissement et non comme un coût.

Justification and self-legitimization are indeed the common objectives of companies' corporate social responsibility discourse (Catenaccio 2012) and of the discursive strategies deployed by international organizations in their public diplomacy practices, which often resemble those of the Public Relations or marketing division of a private company. This need to discursively confer credibility and acceptability on the activities enacted by an organization testifies to the disputable nature of those activities and thus, in the case of intergovernmental bodies, to a covert return of the old notion of conflict among alternative ideological frameworks. In other words, Lapeyre believes that the discourse on development has recently reappropriated the idea of conflict, with its ancillary concepts of social mediation and institutional

compromise, which may be conducive to the adoption of cooperative strategies on a global scale, forcing capitalism to take into account the need for social justice, which is ever more intensely felt by populations in developing countries. The neo-liberal dream of managing economic globalization in the total absence of ideological rivals can only be shattered by the determination of world citizens, finally empowered to choose among different models of development, to shape their destiny according to their own idea of economy and society.

Dialecticism is also crucial to Pierre de Senarclens (Senarclens 2002), who believes that the discourse produced by the UN and its Agencies is still one in which all conflict is comfortably softened or ignored, binary oppositions are carefully avoided and all choice among ethical values and political views is vanquished. Their efforts focus on the vindication of a universally acceptable ethos, with a view to achieving universal approval and uncontroversial consensus. Thus, most of their discursive products are imbued with a chronic vagueness surfacing in the long lists of partly contradictory, often imprecise prescriptions, which are sized down by a number of limiting specifications, easing governments from the conscientious pangs of being unable to implement those prescriptions (Senarclens 2002: 136). Similarly to Lapeyre, Senarclens is aware of a historical shift in the discourse produced by the UN and its Agencies according to the varying dominant cultural and political models. Differently to Lapeyre, however, he states his belief that since the onset of neo-liberalism or the “neo-classic school of economics” in the course of the 1980s, all dialecticism has disappeared from the international scene and from the discourse of international organizations. These have been permanently colonized by the socio-economic ideology of the USA and the great multinational companies due to the US’s choice to decrease their funding contribution to the UN, which has consequently had to find other funding channels – primarily private ones – which provide financial means on condition that their purposes and image may benefit from their contributions. Something similar has happened with universities in the UK and the USA, which have seen themselves forced to look about for funding in the private sector, consequently enslaving their research activities to the latter’s needs and demands. The role of the Secretariats of the UN and other international organizations does not escape this kind of constraints as both Directors General and their staff are elected and appointed on the basis of governmental pressures, so in order to be re-elected they must faithfully adhere to the dominant political and socio-economic model of their electors, which for the last three decades has translated into an obvious hegemony of neo-liberal thought (Senarclens 2002: 137-139). This hegemony has revealed itself in the colonization of institutional discourse by a stereotyped language simplistically describing the new challenges of globalization and the spread of

poverty, suggesting pragmatic solutions which combine technicalities with the dynamics of the free market, and seasoning all with charitable overtones (Senarclens 2002: 140):

Les notions de gouvernance, de société civile, de capital social, de biens publics prennent une place importante dans ce discours, parce qu'elles ont pour but de reproduire les postulats de l'économie néo-classique, de réduire l'intelligence des rapports sociaux à une grammaire individualiste et positiviste définie comme scientifique, de diffuser une analyse favorable à la dynamique du marché tout en évacuant les scories du politique. Les notions de gouvernance et de société civile en particulier véhiculent l'idée que les gouvernements n'ont pas le monopole de la puissance légitime et qu'ils existent d'autres instances, notamment de nature privée, telles les entreprises et les ONG, contribuant au maintien de l'ordre en participant à la régulation économique et sociale. Elles prolongent un courant de pensée d'inspiration fonctionnaliste, qui demande une gestion pragmatique et technocratique des affaires publiques.

This naturalizing approach to the dominant neo-liberal ideology, which is represented as the sole rational understanding of socio-economic reality, is also denounced by Branislav Gosovic (Gosovic 2002: 182-183). He is aware of the role played by the discourse originating with international organizations, in particular by the texts dealing with the relationship between the rich North and the poor South and with all questions concerning the process of social, economic and cultural development. That discourse exerts a strong legitimizing power as it shapes political models – both interpretive and prescriptive – on a global level. Those models are then promoted by multilateral bodies acting as the privileged vehicle for their international acceptance and consolidation, which is made possible by the immense penetrating power they wield. The central role played by institutional discourse accounts for what Gosovic describes as the careful structure and accurate wording of UN texts, in which the choice of phrases and even single words is charged with lurking potentials of ominous ruptures. Those texts are the result of extenuating negotiations over extremely fine linguistic details, they are the fruit of expert mediation over different approaches to a question. That accounts for what strikes Gosovic as the extreme precision of UN language, one in which every linguistic element has its well-defined meaning and significance. Considering the analyst's understanding of the traditional nature and purpose of UN discourse, it is all the more surprising to discover how in his eyes this self-same discourse has evolved into a stereotyped predictable language enacting a monochrome monotone variety of perfectly uniform, uncontroversial, politically correct communication. A “correct” terminology is agreed on, which defines a “correct” interpretation of reality by covering problematic questions or making them “correctly” acceptable. A good example is offered by the term “globalization”, which dominates UN discourse by providing one – allegedly the only

possible – understanding of present-day economic structures and of the process of development. All social, political, economic and even environmental problems of a multifarious international community are read within the same analytical framework and similar strategies are prescribed for their treatment, while a global intellectual hegemony is established which never questions the structures of power, consisting in an uneven distribution of tasks: the rich countries of the North draw the coordinates of the world's economy, interpret them and work out directions, whereas the poor countries of the South take measures – or should take measures – to defeat poverty and corruption, to invest local governments with the function of stewardship and to safeguard the environment, which the rich countries are too busy doing business to consider. Poorer countries are thus forced to shoulder the responsibility for their own distress, charged as they are with ill government and corruption, while wealthier countries discursively discard all involvement in the generation of present-day socio-economic conditions and power relations. The lexicon used in UN reports consists in a limited number of fashionable words which are imbued with the dominant ideological paradigm and stigmatize opposition – should there be any – and possible “deviant” readings of reality. The global “order” is consequently “new”, “modern”, “scientific”, “pragmatic”, it is “engendered by the irresistible advance of history”, there are “opportunities” and “challenges”, while “partnerships” are the indispensable ingredient in all recipes for development. On the contrary, objections to the world's order are labelled as “ideological” and “archaic”: they are “fossils” of a pre-historic past, they are “dinosaurs”. At the same time with the adoption of this “Newspeak”² a number of old-fashioned disturbing words and phrases have been discarded, such as “fairness”, “autonomy”, “public”, “exploitation”, “rural reform” and “national sovereignty”. Another strategy consists in semantically redetermining a few traditional words which used to be much cherished by the UN and other intergovernmental bodies. The example Gosovic gives is the use of the phrase “Doha Development Agenda”, which has been circulated by the World Trade Organization since 2001 in order to make the latest round of trade negotiations among WTO members – focusing on a reduction of tariffs and other trade barriers – more palatable to developing countries. Analysis and interpretation is thus filtered by the linguistic categories worked out by those forces within the international community – both private entities and countries – which wield the highest degree of power. This power is of an inherently discursive nature, although it is obviously enrooted in a position of economic and political dominance which is exerted primarily in strategic decisions to

² The phrase “Newspeak “ was used by Orwell (Orwell 1849) in his dystopian novel *Nineteen eighty-four*.

grant or withdraw – more often to increase or decrease – funding for intergovernmental bodies. This explains why weaker countries are prone to adopt the same discursive resources deployed by stronger members of the international community, in the hope not to touch the latter's susceptibility and run the risk of seeing both funds for multilateral organizations and funds for private investments within their borders cut. The “new orthodoxy” has thus established itself and there seems to be no possibility of dethroning it in the near future, with a consequent descent of international political thought into what Gosovic calls “unified thought”. The only chance envisaged by Gosovic for a break with this ruinous intellectual hegemony is a return to the original mandate of the United Nations and an attempt to pool resources for the shaping of an independent approach to socio-economic questions under the guidance of all free thinkers of the South:

On ne peut pas continuer d'abandonner la création conceptuelle à un certain groupe de pays, et de gens, qui imposent leur pensée par le pouvoir, notamment à travers la Banque mondiale et le FMI, pour ce qui concerne la politique économique et financière mondiale et nationale [...] Quant à l'OMC, tout est fait par son Secrétariat, qui est complètement liée aux intérêts du Nord. [...] Pour débloquer la situation, la seule solution est de retourner aux sources de l'ONU, à son mandat, sa charte. Puis d'accorder à l'ONU des ressources financières indépendantes, en instituant par exemple quelque chose comme une taxation globale, pour que cet argent ne dépende pas de quelque pays que ce soit. Si cela ne marche pas avec l'ONU, il faudra inventer autre chose. Les intellectuels indépendants du Nord et du Sud pourraient participer à cette création nouvelle. Mais il n'en ont pas l'occasion. Ils se cachent. Ils sont marginalisés: ils se trouvent soit dans les gouvernements soit dans les institutions privées ou les universités, mais il n'y a pas de lien entre eux. Chacun travaille dans son coin. [...] Le néo-libérisme est une idéologie qui est propagée par certains cercles aujourd'hui au pouvoir. Comment alors créer un mécanisme rassembleur? C'est là la grande question. Pour créer ce mécanisme aujourd'hui, il faut de l'argent, de la légitimité et des personnes compétentes, avec une notoriété mondiale. En fin de compte, cela devrait être le rôle de l'ONU, ou de l'institution qui lui succédera.

That this power, which Gosovic represents as firmly held by the North and its ancillary entities – both private, national and transnational – reveals its sweeping force primarily in discourse, is a well-known feature of traditional ideologies, whose discursive practices have often been labelled as “wooden language”, as is the case with Stalin and his regime's huge mass of pre-made, stereotyped, “purified” speeches and written documents aiming to divulge and hammer in communist political propaganda (Steiner 2002). This wooden language has often been identified with the language of the political opponent, of the ideological “other”, above all after the fall of the Berlin Wall, when ideologies seemed to have quickly evolved into fossils of the past. However, the wooden language has in fact survived well into present-day societies and in today's globalized socio-economic and political discourse, disguised

as the “cotton” or “plastic” language of our virtual though transparent social reality. Cotton and plastic are much more pliable than wood, therefore an extremely adaptable material which easily changes shape and subtly reflects the characteristics of the social environment in which it is set. Far from being scientific and irrefutable, the discourse originating with international organizations and the guardians of the world’s economy is an instrument of power, in the same way as the “wooden language” of the former Soviet Union and of all totalitarian regimes. Whatever the material acting as vehicle in the metaphor – be it wood, cotton or plastic – this language confers authority and authoritativeness on those who use it. The question remains open whether this discourse is instrumental to communication, that is to say to an effective verbal exchange of thought, or whether it is merely a means to cover purposes and consolidate hierarchies in the production of ideas on a global scale.

3. Purpose of the research and corpus collection

As appears from a review of the existing literature on the discursive practices of international organizations, a promising area of research is represented by a critical delving into those practices with a view to uncovering the communicative purpose or purposes of their periodical publications and the discursive strategies adopted therein.

Diagnostically sieving through a representative sample of the considerable amount of texts turned out by international organizations at a fairly regular pace may prove a rewarding activity in two ways: first and foremost, texts organize themselves into genres and genre colonies (Bhatia 2004) on the basis of their communicative purpose, and secondly, a study of discursive strategies may be conducive to an understanding of the rationale for the genre represented by institutional reports. An inquiry into the area of institutional discourse represented by the reports of international organizations with a view to identifying their underlying communicative purpose or purposes and their generic integrity will thus provide a first fundamental research question. A further area of investigation will be the complex network of discursive strategies through which the interpersonal and ideational dimensions of the meaning-making process take shape (Halliday / Matthiessen 2004). To this end a corpus has been built, consisting of three subcorpora. Amid the enormous wealth of written text published both in print and on the Worldwide Web by three intergovernmental bodies – the Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Health Organization and the World Trade Organization – the corpus chosen for analysis has been selected on the basis of three main criteria. The first criterion consists in the periodical nature of the publications, usually annual ones. With the *State of Food Insecurity* and with the *World Health Report* there have been individual years when no issue appeared, but these are exceptions to the rule of an essentially annual

publication. With WTO, there has been a yearly issue ever since the first *World Trade Report* in 2003. The second criterion is the nature of the publications, which are all reports about institutional activities, problematic areas and strategies for possible solutions. The definition “report” only features in the titles of the WTO’s and WHO’s documents, not in the *State of Food Insecurity (SOFI)*, where, however, “state” may be read as a synonym for “report”. The third criterion finally concerns the time span covered by the texts, extending from the late 1990s / early 2000s to the present day. Corpus collection was stopped on 31st December 2011 for the purposes of automatic searching. It would be interesting to analyze the genesis of those documents whose drafting is still in progress. Indeed, both WHO and WTO have opened forums for readers’ contributions in the form of suggestions for a title, feedback on subject selection, musings on the topic of the next issue as well as feedback on the previous issue. The interactive nature of the discursive practices leading to the forthcoming reports represents a golden opportunity for a sociolinguistic study of the backstage work which is conducive to the release of the final product. The choice to go “backstage” in the analysis would require ample recourse to “field work” and would necessarily move the final drop on corpus collection well into 2012. However, an in-depth study of the process which generates the production of institutional discourse lies beyond the scope of this research.

As to the organization of the textual material under analysis, the three subcorpora into which it falls coincide with the discursive production of each international organization. These are not perfectly homogeneous in terms of size and chronology. The first subcorpus consists of the twelve reports published by FAO between 1999 and 2011 – with the exception of the year 2007. The second subcorpus is made up of the twelve reports released by WHO from 1998 to 2010. No report was drawn in 2009 and 2011. Finally, the third subcorpus is represented by the nine reports issued by WTO from 2003 to 2011:

<i>The State of Food Insecurity</i> 1999-2011 (subcorpus I)	<i>The World Health Report</i> 1998-2010 (subcorpus II)	<i>World Trade Report</i> 2003-2011 (subcorpus III)
250,156 tokens TTR: 41.40	833,394 tokens TTR: 41.80	1,243,401 tokens TTR: 39.08

Table 1. The three subcorpora

The difficulty arising from the difference in size between subcorpora can be easily solved by repositioning raw results on the number of occurrences through percentage calculations and statistical filters.

The corpus will be analyzed through a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, which will be illustrated in the next chapter. There the discourse analytical approach adopted in the research and the double perspective on synchronic and diachronic aspects of institutional report writing will be described in detail.

Chapter III

Methodological approach

1. An integration of approaches

The assumption underlying the analysis presented in this work is that discourse is a multifaceted object of research and consequently requires a multifocal approach, that is to say one which combines an investigation of the context of production with an examination of macro- and micro-linguistic features. This integration of interpretive tools aims to fully uncover the meaning potential of texts with a view to revealing the hidden areas, if any, of sense and sense-making.

A consideration of context is therefore an essential component of an accurate decoding of institutional reports, like any other text, be it oral or written. Context is itself a complex element consisting in a number of features which are often made the object of strategic choices.

In this analysis, the first step will be textual analysis in terms of text types (Werlich 1983), which often reveals subtle shifts and variable profiles. Indeed, the choice among description, narration, exposition, argumentation and instruction, or the alternation of those typologies enables the encoder to organize meaning according to communicative purpose, exploiting the resources of textual cohesion and coherence which are specific to the relevant text type. From the point of view of recipients and analysts, an understanding of the textual pattern underlying discourse is conducive to a clear-sighted perception of the distribution of “knowledge exchange” and “activity exchange” units (Fairclough 2003: 105-119), which may contribute to a correct interpretation of representational strategies. The next step in this research will be a study of the deictic category of person, which plays a central role in the structuring of the participation framework (Goffmann 1981) and may shed precious light on the interpersonal dimension of communication. Another crucial aspect of the interpersonal dimension is modality, which will also come under careful scrutiny. Finally, the focus will shift to a study of communicative purposes and rhetorical strategies / actions within the theoretical framework of genre analysis (Miller 1984; Bhatia 1993; 2004; Swales 1990), which delineates the network of intertextual relationships among discourse samples sharing the same communicative purpose within the same context of production.

Text and genre analysis will deploy qualitative analytical tools. A quantitative approach¹ will, on the other hand, dominate the examination of such microlinguistic features as person and modality, as well as the study of the markers of transitivity (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004) and of lexical items and lexico-syntactical patterns. The extraction of word frequencies and concordances is extremely useful for the delineation of what van Dijk calls “local meanings” (Diik van 1998; 2000), while the extraction of keywords and a calculation of their keyness may lead to an interesting comparative study of texts grouped into subcorpora on the basis of chronology and other criteria.

This research is carried out on the double level of synchronic and short-term diachronic analysis in order to provide an as complete as possible account of the discursive strategies adopted by institutional short-term reports and of their underlying communicative purpose, which may reveal interesting shifts over time, as well as variation across the different groups of documents included in the corpus and within one and the same document (Bondi / Scott 2010).

2. Text analysis: from the macro- to the micro-level

This study will examine the three subcorpora consisting of the reports published by FAO, WHO and the WTO from a discourse analytical perspective, combining an interest in pragmatically relevant categories, such as person, with a probing of texts aiming to uncover their recurrent rhetorical patterns.

Recognizing the main cognitive function of texts is an essential requisite for a correct processing of discursive products both in isolation and within the network of intertextual relationships they establish with functionally similar texts. Our perception of textual products in terms of their underlying textual grammar – in other words of their being a description of an element in reality or a state of things, a narration of events, an analysis of concepts and phenomena, an argumentation in favour of or against a thesis or a set of instructions as to a future course of action – strongly influences our expectations about texts, about their informative or directive nature and the communicative gap they fill. Thus the macro-categories elaborated by text grammar may prove a formidable analytical tool in the service of purpose detection and thus genre analysis, though there is yet no agreement as to the degree of applicability of text-grammatical categories to the study of the generic pattern underlying texts (Garzone 2012). The reports in the three subcorpora will be examined with a view to drawing a profile of the textual typologies deployed and studying their implications on the organization of propositions and proposals, in other words on the ideational and interpersonal dimensions (Halliday / Matthiessen 2004) of these texts.

¹ On corpus linguistics, see McEnery / Wilson 1996; Sinclair 1991; 2004; Stubbs 1996; Tognini-Bonelli 2001.

An exploration into fine linguistic/pragmatic choices concerning personal pronouns and possessive forms may prove extremely revealing for a clearer delineation of the participation framework and of the pragmatically defined positions allocated to the encoders and decoders of institutional reports. Fine distinctions may be drawn as to the imagined readers and the real audience of the texts examined, while the construction of the envisaged author is achieved through the subtle use of first-person forms as well as other discursive strategies. In particular, the choice of first-person singular and first-person plural pronouns, either receiver-inclusive or receiver-exclusive², and of reader-engaging second-person plural forms has an organizing function on the relationship between authors and addressees. I will therefore analyze the use and distribution of all these forms in the reports with a view to identifying the deictic centre and its symbolic implications.

The delineation of what we may call “the communicative environment” is an essential step on the way to an accurate analysis of institutional reports as language products originating in and relating to a context of production. The study of such pragmatic features as person will thus be followed by a careful examination of a micro-linguistic trait which may reveal interesting aspects of the interpersonal dimension of institutional language, namely modality.

The results of this careful reading of textual products will be made more objective and reliable through the adoption of an intercoder reliability test, that is to say another “coder” or “rater” will be asked to kindly perform the same textual analysis to then compare results with the first coder.³ If any differences should emerge from a comparison of the two ratings, they will be eased out by a negotiation of views, or be illustrated in the analysis⁴. Recourse will thus be made to a close reading of texts, in the course of which subjective impressions will become the object of a systematic double check. This qualitative analysis will be combined with an automatic search of personal pronouns, verbal modal operators and a number of strategic lexical items. To this end the software *Wordsmith Tools 4.0*, created by Mike Scott in 2004, will be used (Scott 2004).

2.1. A text grammatical approach

In this work the analytical framework provided by the German linguist Egon Werlich for a typological categorization of texts in English on the basis of their

² On inclusive, exclusive and ambiguous “we”, see Benveniste 1966.

³ Paola Catenaccio was so kind as to offer herself in the role of second coder.

⁴ Intercoder reliability testing is extremely useful when dealing with content analysis or other analysis which cannot be fully conducted on a quantitative basis. For Intercoder reliability analysis, see Lombard / Snyder / Campanella Bracken 2002.

functional and structural organization (Werlich 1983) will be strongly relied on. As a matter of fact, Werlich worked out a useful set of rules for a successful coding and decoding of texts, which he defines as “extended structures of syntactic units such as words, groups and clauses and textual units that are marked by both coherence and completion”. He details coherence and completion in the following way (Werlich 1983: 23-24):

Coherence and completion are text grammatical concepts basic to the understanding of the linguistic constitution and delimitation of texts. *Coherence* is created in linguistic communication whenever the encoding communicant (*encoder*) uses some linguistic unit (usually a *group* of words or a *sentence*) as a *text base unit* with a theme and then expands this unit in linear progression in conventionally ordered and completed sequences of linguistic units. [...] *Completion* is created in linguistic communication whenever the encoder introduces signals which indicate both the beginning and the end of one or more of the sequences that have established coherence.

Werlich then goes on to define two crucial categories in his understanding of text, that is to say the “thematic text base”, i. e. the initiatory unit in a text – though not necessarily the opening sentence – which is prone to revealing textual typology from the start, and its “thematic expansion” into a cohesive and completed text (Werlich 1983: 30):

A thematic text base is a text initial linguistic unit which both structurally and semantically permits expansion into a text by sequences of coherent and completed linguistic units. [...] Thematic expansion is the linguistic operation by which encoders produce coherent and completed sequences from a thematic text base. The result of thematic expansion is a text.

The process of thematic expansion of a thematic text base is termed “topicalization” and takes place on two levels: consciously in directly observable, historically produced text forms, and unconsciously in ideal mental constructs or text types.

Werlich’s model identifies five text types – description, narration, exposition, argumentation and instruction – on the basis of their “dominant contextual focus”, then moves on to indicate the initiating “thematic text base” and the structural features which characterize each typology, as well as its distribution. Texts characterized by a dominant contextual focus on factual phenomena in the spatial context are descriptive in nature, while texts focusing on factual or conceptual phenomena in the temporal context are narrative; texts focusing on the de-composition – analysis – into constituent elements or on the composition – synthesis – from constituent elements of concepts or phenomena are expository, whereas texts with their dominant contextual focus on the relations between concepts or phenomena have an argumentative character. Finally, texts focusing on the composition of observable future behavior in one of the communicants – be they encoders or decoders – are inherently instructive. These

text types “correlate with *forms and ranges of human cognition*” in that they “reflect the basic cognitive processes of contextual categorization” (Werlich 1983: 21). Here follows an illustration of the five text types.

2.1.1. Description

Description is shown by Werlich to either take on the form of impressionistic description – that is to say description from a subjective point of view – or the form of technical description – in other words description from an objective point of view. The thematic text base “from which the encoder starts” is in this case the “*simple phenomenon-registering sentence*” and “the descriptive text idiom is marked by phenomenon-registering sentences and their variants in sequence” (Werlich 1983: 47).

In impressionistic description the encoder may choose to adopt a hyperbolic, or a metaphorical, a comparative or an evocative style, while “the text-form specific *functional coherence* in impressionistic description is determined by the encoder’s choice of *a personal point of view*” (Werlich 1983: 48-49). Either a “*narrowing* or a *widening focus*” is opted for and the choice of tenses focuses on the Present or the Past Tense group (Werlich 1983: 49). The sequence forms establishing “both coherence and completion in impressionistic description are principally used in *spatial [...] text structuring*” (Werlich 1983: 50) and completion “is determined by the encoder’s conventional choice of the *direction-determining introduction* in the text base and a conclusion with explicit *spatial terminators*” (Werlich 1983: 50). As to distribution, impressionistic descriptions are typically found as comparatively short text divisions in narratives and reportages.

In technical description phenomena are presented “from the point of view of objective observation in space” (Werlich 1983: 51), in other words from “a *non-personal third-person point of view*”, with a preference for technical style, the adoption of a narrowing focus and the temporal choice of the “*timeless Present Tense*” (Werlich 1983: 53). Here too sequence forms are of the spatial kind, and completion “is determined by the encoder’s conventional choice of a *direction-determining introduction* in the text base and the suggestion of termination by relying on *referential presuppositions* about the completed description of a specific referent” (Werlich 1983: 54). Distribution sees technical descriptions as text divisions of newspaper articles, scientific papers, non-fiction books and articles in encyclopedias.

2.1.2. Narration

In narrative text types, the thematic text base is a “*simple action-recording sentence*”. Two text forms are traceable in this text type, that is to say the

narrative, or “narration from a subjective point of view”, and the report, or “narration from an objective point of view” (Werlich 1983: 55).

In narratives, the encoder may choose a comparative or a metaphorical style, and functional coherence “is determined by the encoder’s choice of a *personal point of view*” (Werlich 1983: 56), which surfaces in the use of the first-person singular and of the third-person. The focus may be either narrowing or widening, while the prevalent tense system is that of the Past Tense group, although some variants show a preference for the Present Tense group. Topical coherence is achieved through the adoption of temporal sequence forms, which structure the text into a chronological, or climactic, or plotted narrative, depending on the criterion for the sequencing of changes being related – whether chronological, climactic or causal. Completion “is determined by the encoder’s conventional choice of the *situational introduction* and its variants in the text base and a conclusion with explicit *temporal terminators*” (Werlich 1983: 58-59). Narratives are found in anecdotes, jokes and stories, with all their possible variants.

As regards reports, the style selected is often formal or technical, whereas functional coherence translates into the non-personal third-person point of view, the first-person plural or the personal third-person point of view. The tense systems are the Past Tense and occasionally the Present Tense groups. Sequence forms are of the temporal, listing and general-to-particular kind according to the form of text structuring chosen, while completion “is determined by the encoder’s conventional choice of a *situational heading* in the text base and a conclusion with explicit terminators. Conventional conclusions in reports are the *inference-drawing conclusion* and the *instructive conclusion*” (Werlich 1983: 62). As to distribution, reports are frequent in newspapers – in the form of the news story – in briefs, non-fiction books and in various institutional papers, primarily those bearing the definition “report” in their denomination.

2.1.3. Exposition

Expository texts are the thematic expansion of a thematic text base consisting in a simple phenomenon-identifying sentence – synthetic exposition – or in a simple phenomenon-linking sentence – analytic exposition. The text form variants of analytic exposition are “the subjective *expository essay* and the predominantly objective text form variants of *definition* and *explication*”, while the text form variants of synthetic exposition are “the objective [...] *summary* and *minutes*”, and “ a mixture of analytic and synthetic exposition is most frequent in the predominantly objective text form of the *text interpretation*” (Werlich 1983: 71). Among the many expository text forms, the expository essay, the explication, the summary and the text interpretation will be considered here in detail.

In the expository essay “the encoder attempts [...] a simple explanation of concepts, mental constructs or conceptions from the subjective point of view of

his own knowledge and intuitions about their component elements” (Werlich 1983: 72). The style is either formal or informal, illustrative or comparative, while functional coherence “is determined by the encoder’s choice of a *personal point of view*. The encoder generally seeks to lessen the distance between himself and his addressee by speaking from the *first-person singular point of view*, the *second-person point of view*, [...] the *first-person plural point of view* and the *non-personal third-person point of view*” (Werlich 1983: 73). The choice of tenses falls on the Present Tense group. Topical coherence is achieved through the “encoder’s topicalization of concepts or mental constructs and their elements which are associated with a specialized field of knowledge” (Werlich 1983: 73), and sequence forms are of the listing and analytical kind. Completion “is determined by the encoder’s conventional choice of the *numerical introduction* or the *topic-giving introduction* in the text base and a termination with the *subsumptive conclusion* or the *return-to-the-beginning conclusion*” (74). Distribution involves the longer articles in quality papers, journals and magazines.

While definition is used “to explain how isolated linguistic signs (i. e. ‘words’ used as terms or names) are interrelated with mental *concepts*” (Werlich 1983: 75), explication is usually characterized by the adoption of a formal and technical style. Functional coherence results from the choice of the non-personal third-person point of view and of the timeless Present Tense. Topical coherence is achieved through the use of numerical sequence forms, while completion “is determined by the encoder’s conventional choice of the *listing introduction*, the *numerical introduction* and/or the *topic-giving introduction* in the text base and the *subsumptive conclusion*, which is usually announced by *summative terminators*” (Werlich 1983: 84). Explications are found in papers and treatises, encyclopaedic articles, and as sections in comments and reports, technical description, scientific argumentation, definitions and text interpretations.

Summaries are used “to explain and communicate about ‘texts’ in shorter reading or listening time than the decoding of the original text takes” (Werlich 1983: 86). The length of the summary depends on the encoder’s communicative purpose. The style selected is often formal or technical, and functional coherence is marked by the use of a personal or non-personal third-person point of view, combined with the choice of the Present Tense group. Topical coherence is achieved through the adoption of sequence forms which are typical of the original text being summarized, and completion “is determined by the encoder’s conventional choice of the *topic-giving introduction* in the text base and the *subsumptive conclusion* at the end” (Werlich 1983: 91). The main text form variants of the summary are the abstract, the synopsis, and that kind of minutes which summarize a spoken text original.

In text interpretations, style selection usually falls on formal, technical and illustrative style, whereas functional coherence is made possible by the use of a

personal third-person or a non-personal third-person point of view, combined with the choice of the Present Tense group. Topical coherence “is determined by the encoder’s topicalization of linguistic signs which are constituent elements of some textual whole” (Werlich 1983: 102). Sequence forms are those typical of analytical text structuring and general-to-particular text structuring, while completion “is determined by the encoder’s conventional choice of the *topic-giving introduction* in the text base and the *subsumptive conclusion* at the end” (Werlich 1983: 102). Text interpretations occur in didactic situations, that is to say when the decoder takes on the role of learner, or within a number of disciplines, such as law, philosophy and theology.

2.1.4. Argumentation

In argumentative texts “the encoder starts from the implicit or explicit statement of a problem. He poses the question of how a *given fact* (event, object, idea) should be classified by proposing relations between this fact and conflicting concepts or systems of thought” (Werlich 1983: 106). The thematic text base is represented by an either affirmative or negative quality-attributing sentence. There are two text form variants of argumentation: the comment, which is argumentation from a subjective point of view in that the encoder “passes judgment by relating concepts of events, and ideas to his private systems of thought, values and beliefs” (Werlich 1983: 107), and scientific argumentation, which is argumentation from an objective point of view as in it the encoder “passes judgment by relating concepts of events, objects, and ideas to systems of thought and knowledge so that the resultant propositions can be verified as valid or as valid hypotheses” (Werlich 1983: 113).

The comment may be characterized by the adoption of an informal, ironical, appreciatory, depreciatory and persuasive style. Functional coherence is achieved through the choice of the Present Tense group and of a personal point of view as the encoder usually speaks in the first person singular, while topical coherence “is determined by the encoder’s topicalization of propositions of relations between concepts in opposition to deviant or alternative views of these relations. The encoder proceeds by topicalizing the elements of a *major thesis* (often in opposition to a cited thesis) by linking it with topically related *evidence* and *conclusions* from this evidence which support, and again result in, the major thesis” (Werlich 1983: 109). Sequence forms are those typical of deductive, inductive, dialectical and climactic text structuring, whereas completion “is determined by the encoder’s conventional choice of the *antithetical introduction* and/or the *citatory introduction* in the text base and the *inference-drawing conclusion*, the *return-to-the-beginning conclusion*, and/or the *citatory conclusion* at the end” (Werlich 1983: 109). As to distribution, the comment is a common text

form whenever a quick evaluation of problems is required, that is to say in discussions and debates, columns, reviews and leading articles.

In scientific argumentation the style is often formal and technical, while functional coherence is marked by the adoption of a non-personal third-person and of the first-person plural point of view; the first-person singular may also occur, when the encoder expresses their own propositions and conclusions. The Present Tense group characterizes scientific argumentation, whose topical coherence “is determined by the encoder’s topicalization of specific relations between scientific concepts in opposition to deviant or alternative propositions of relations between the same concepts. The encoder proceeds by topicalizing the elements of a *major thesis* (often in opposition to a cited thesis), linking it with objectively verifiable *evidence* and *conclusions* from this evidence which support, and again result in, the major thesis” (Werlich 1983: 120). The sequence forms commonly used in scientific argumentation are typical of deductive, inductive, dialectical, climactic, listing and analytical text structuring. Completion “is determined by the encoder’s conventional choice of the *antithetical introduction* in the text base and the *inference-drawing conclusion*, the *return-to-the-beginning conclusion* and/or the *subsumptive conclusion* at the end” (Werlich 1983: 120). Distribution sees a prevalence of scientific argumentation in combination with expository text divisions.

2.1.5. Instruction

Instructive texts present the planning of future behavior and are the thematic expansion of a thematic text base consisting in an action-demanding sentence, which may take on the form of a command, a statement preceded by a conditional clause, or a request. The subjective text form variant is that of instructions, while the objective variants are those of directions, rules, regulations and statutes.

In instructions, “the encoder presents demands for a certain behavior as his own demands or those of a more or less biased group to which he belongs. For his instructions to be translated into observable behavior by the addressee, the encoder relies on various kinds of *personal authority*, such as provided by a job, position, rank, status, role, or by experience, knowledge, or superiority as a person” (Werlich 1983: 122-123). The style may be polite, persuasive, or appreciatory, while functional coherence is achieved through the use of the Future Tense group and of the imperative mood, combined with a personal point of view, which may translate into a first person in the case of sender-directed instructions, or into a second person with receiver-directed instructions. Topical coherence is established through sequence forms typically characterizing analytical and listing text structuring. Completion “is determined by the encoder’s conventional choice of the *topic-giving introduction* or a *headline* in the text base” (Werlich 1983: 125), while termination depends on the kind of text structuring chosen. As regards

distribution, instructions are found as text divisions in comments, reports, sermons and prayers, letters and political speeches.

In directions, rules, regulations and statutes, the encoder relies on one of two forms of impersonal authority: either the practical validity attached to the observable properties of phenomena, or the public authority which is typical of statutory instruction. Functional coherence is determined by the choice of either a non-personal third-person or a second-person point of view, combined with the use of the Present Tense group. Topical coherence is achieved through sequence forms which characterize analytical and listing text structuring, and completion “is determined by the encoder’s conventional choice of the *numerical introduction*, a *headline*, or a *formalized introduction* that refers to some public authority in the text base and a *formalized conclusion* at the end” (Werlich 1983: 130). As to distribution, practical instruction is found in work directions, technical instructions, recommendations, precepts, prescriptions, recipes, guides, manuals, while statutory instruction can be classified as regulations, statutes, contracts, treaties, Acts of Parliament, testaments and rules of games.

Being comparatively long texts, the reports under analysis in this research may show considerable variability in the range of text types they embed. As a matter of fact, they may be expected to be the product of typological mixing, with a resulting intertwining of text types. A study of possible recurrent patterns in the textual profile across reports in the three subcorpora may shed some light on the handling of the ideational metafunction (Halliday / Matthiessen 2004) in these texts, thus contributing to unravelling strategic representational choices in institutional reporting.

3. Genre analysis: a study of rhetorical patterns and communicative purposes

As discourse is the result of a vital interaction between text and context, it is not possible to seriously embark on the analysis of text without considering the spatial, temporal and interpersonal coordinates of text production. De Beaugrande and Dressler (De Beaugrande and Dressler 1981) explain how crucial the text-external – in other words contextual – standards of textuality are in the construction of meaningful texts. Only in the light of intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality and intertextuality can a cohesive and coherent text be appreciated as such. Cohesion and coherence are text-centered notions, while the other criteria for textuality focus on the user, that is to say on the encoder engaging in a discursive activity which is immersed in a contextual space. This contextual space needs to be explored in its literal and metaphoric implications, as needs the network of relationships which are established between encoders and decoders.

Of the five text-external criteria, intertextuality, which concerns the factors connecting the use of a text to the knowledge of one or more previously encountered texts, is inextricably related to the concept of genre, which actually relies on the network of pragmatic connections among texts produced within the same speech community or the same discourse community (Swales 1990), for approximately the same purpose or purposes and, more generally, within the same or similar contextual frameworks. Those connections consist in a recurrence of forms – what Bhatia calls “rhetorical moves” – within an ample range of possible variations, involving the distinction between obligatory and non-obligatory moves, the choice of move order and the option of move repetition. Since the rhetorical units into which any genre sample can be broken down are the result of both text-internal choices and text-external circumstances, genre analysis calls for an exploration of text as well as a study of contextual coordinates. This double-level analysis is implicitly required by the very definition Swales provides for the concept of genre (Swales 1990: 58):

A genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style. Communicative purpose is both a privileged criterion and one that operates to keep the scope of a genre as here conceived narrowly focused on comparable rhetorical action. In addition to purpose, exemplars of a genre exhibit various patterns of similarity in terms of structure, style, content and intended audience.

The study of the “patterns of similarity” in structure, style and content is of a textual nature, while the examination of the “parent discourse community” and of the “rationale for the genre” is clearly context-oriented. Swales’ two levels of analysis turn into a “multi-perspective model” in Bhatia’s integrated genre analysis (Bhatia 2004: 18-22), a model which specifies the peculiarities of textual and contextual space:

I am using discourse as text to refer to the analysis of language use that is confined to the surface-level properties of discourse, which include formal as well as functional aspects of discourse, that is phonological, lexico-grammatical, semantic, organizational [...]. Discourse as genre, in contrast, extends the analysis beyond the textual product to incorporate context in a broader sense to account for not only the way text is constructed, but also for the way it is often interpreted, used and exploited in specific institutional or more narrowly professional contexts to achieve specific disciplinary goals. The nature of the questions addressed in this kind of analysis may often include not only the linguistic, but also the socio-cognitive and the ethnographic. [...] Discourse as social practice takes this interaction with the context much further in the direction of broader social context, where the focus shifts significantly from the textual output to the features of context [...].

Thus text and context, product and process are both recognized as relevant objects of genre analysis and are consequently placed under the analyst's magnifying lens for cross examination.

The need for this double-level approach justifies the adoption of a double-pronged methodological toolkit, one that combines subjective and objective perspectives on the object of analysis. This integration of qualitative and quantitative analytical tools stems from the complex nature of the interpretive effort, which is grounded in the analyst's personal response to the idiosyncratic use to which samples of a given genre are put, but at the same time rests on directly observable and therefore quantifiable data of a strictly textual and intertextual nature.

As a matter of fact, only through an inherently subjective evaluation of aims can the multiplicity of communicative purposes and the stratification of antecedent genres (Jamieson 1975) and embedded discourses within a given generic model be identified.

Another aspect to be considered is that genres are hardly ever pure, as in most cases they present some degree of hybridization. As Bhatia points out (Bhatia 2004), a hybridization of discourses takes place when generic resources migrate from one discourse to another, thus generating a process of appropriation of generic features through genre mixing and embedding (87-88):

Genres often operate within their own territorial boundaries, displaying their individually recognizable integrity [...]. However, in the context of the present-day interdisciplinary and dynamic world of work, it is often difficult to keep the individual generic boundaries intact, and it has become even more difficult because of the explosion of information technology, the use of new media and also the overpowering influence of promotional activities in today's competitive world. Of all the genres which have invaded the territorial integrity of many professional and academic genres, 'advertising' clearly stands out to be the most predominant instrument of colonization. It has successfully invaded a number of professional genres, including academic, corporate, political, journalistic and many of the reporting genres [...]

This "invasion of territorial integrity" occurs as a consequence of the dynamism of genres, which are no static practices, but rather evolve over time (Garzone 2012) and in the process of doing so often appropriate discursive resources from other genres as a function of changing communicative purposes.

The aim of this research is a study of the discursive strategies adopted in the reports of international organizations and of their generic integrity, with a focus on the identification of the underlying cognitive-rhetorical pattern and of both overt and covert communicative purposes. Critical discourse analysis – from now on referred to as CDA – will provide genre analysis with an indispensable interpretive tool, with a view to identifying possible gaps between declared and real aims and to tracing hybridizing migrations of generic features for the

purposes of genre bending. CDA is both a theoretical framework and an analytical toolkit aiming to uncover underlying causal links between social and discursive practices (Fairclough 1995b: 132-133):

By ‘critical’ discourse analysis I mean discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony.

A study of that “opaque” area between social structures and discursive practices may be conducive to interesting findings as to the interweaving of power relationships, though this line of analysis will only be touched upon in this research as it would require a considerably deeper delving into implicit meaning than the scope of this study allows.

4. Transitivity and “local meanings”

Finally, I will proceed to analyze the “local meanings” encapsulated in a number of syntactic, lexical and collocational choices. In order to carefully examine a few significant microlinguistic features, I will restrict analysis to a fraction of the corpus through the selection of a subcorpus, consisting of the introductory *Forewords* or *Messages* prefaced to the reports. The rationale for this close-up is provided both by the emblematic character of these introductory texts which epitomize the reports proper and by the obvious need to carefully examine texts which should ideally be manageable in size if any detailed study is to be carried out.

The analysis of local meanings in this smaller corpus will rely on the analytical tools elaborated by CDA, which may prove extremely useful if coupled with an automatic search of texts (Garzone / Santulli 2004). In particular, a study of the deep-syntax-level structure of transitivity is likely to yield fruitful results as to the selection of information to be handed over to the readers. Halliday’s ergative model may shed precious light on the handling of agentivity, whose presence or absence from texts reveals the inclination to either embrace or reject the task of allocating responsibility. Similarly, if texts were found to deliberately ignore causal links and to represent phenomena as the inevitable outcome of irresistible forces, this would indicate a refusal to explore the processes which generate phenomena and the choice to once again conceal responsibility.

4.1. A “trinocular” perspective on language

Michael Halliday has explored the mysterious ways in which meaning is encoded in texts (Halliday / Matthiessen 2004), in particular the systems of transitivity and ergativity, which may translate into useful analytical tools in the second part of this research. In order to fully grasp the theoretical and analytical implications of the transitive and ergative model, it is essential to focus on what he calls the “trinocular” perspective he has provided on language. In an attempt to uncover the fascinating “architecture of language”, he has delved into the many dimensions of meaning making, which appear “stratified” in language (Halliday / Matthiessen 2004: 24-25):

[...] a language is a complex semiotic system, having various levels, or strata. [...] We use language to make sense of our experience, and to carry out our interactions with other people. This means that the grammar has to interface with what goes on outside language: with the happenings and conditions of the world, and with the social processes we engage in. But at the same time it has to organize the construal of experience, and the enactment of social processes, so that they can be transformed into wording. The way it does this is by splitting the task into two. In step one, the interfacing part, experience and interpersonal relationships are transformed into meaning; this is the stratum of semantics. In step two, the meaning is further transformed into wording; this is the stratum of lexicogrammar. This is, of course, expressing it from the point of view of a speaker, or writer; for a listener, the steps are the other way round.

This stratification of meaning is what Halliday believes to have acted as the primary force in the evolution of the human species, from *homo* to *homo sapiens*. It is so powerful a means for the structuring of thought that it has had a modelling influence on the human brain. The two steps of the “semogenic process” (Halliday / Matthiessen 2004: 25) serve two basic functions of language: “making sense of our experience and acting out our social relationships” (Halliday / Matthiessen 2004: 25). In other words, language construes human experience by naming things, classifying them into categories and categories into taxonomies, thus sorting out reality into a cognitive framework, which, among other things, organizes lexis into networks of hyperonyms and hyponyms and, more generally, provides a theory of human experience. This is what Halliday terms the “ideational metafunction” (Halliday / Matthiessen 2004: 29), which he further breaks into its constituent elements, the experiential and the logical. At the same time as it construes experience, language also enacts our personal and social relationships with other people, which is, still in Halliday’s terms, “its interpersonal metafunction” (Halliday / Matthiessen 2004: 29-30):

The clause of the grammar is not only a figure, representing some process – some doing or happening, saying or sensing, being or having – with its various participants and circumstances; it is also a proposition, or a proposal, whereby we inform or question, give an order or make an offer, and express our approval of and attitude towards whoever we are

addressing and what we are talking about. This kind of meaning is more active: if the ideational function of the grammar is 'language as reflection', this is 'language as action'. We call it the interpersonal metafunction, to suggest that it is both interactive and personal.

In Halliday's model of language, there is still another component in the construction of text. This third mode of meaning, called "textual metafunction", consists in the ability "to build up sequences of discourse, organizing the discursive flow and creating cohesion and continuity as it moves along" (Halliday / Matthiessen 2004: 30). Halliday justifies his choice to coin the term "metafunction" instead of using the word "function", which is already part of English vocabulary, on account of the need to avoid the use of a common word, whose meaning more or less coincides with that of such lexical items as "purpose", or "way of using something". In order to clearly distinguish these concepts from the more technical "mode of meaning", he introduces the term "metafunction", which offers the additional advantage of indicating the superordinate nature of this category within the theoretical framework of his systemic-functional grammar. Halliday explains his choice of the adjectives "systemic" and "functional" as resulting from the meaning-making orientation of grammar – the "semanticky" nature of grammar – and from its organizing principle: the principle of "system" or "network of interrelated meaningful choices" (Halliday / Matthiessen 2004: 31). To iconize his idea of language as a complex system of multiple dimensions, he introduces his famous metaphor of the trinocular perspective on grammar (Halliday / Matthiessen 2004: 31):

If we use the familiar metaphor of vertical space, as implied in the word 'stratum', the stratum 'above' is the semantics, that 'below' is the phonology. We cannot expect to understand the grammar just by looking at it from its own level; we also look into it 'from above and 'from below', taking a **trinocular perspective**.

The three metafunctions of language are reflected in the three different functional configurations of the clause – "clause as a message", "clause as exchange" and "clause as representation" (Halliday / Matthiessen 2004: 58-59) – which correspond to the textual, interpersonal and ideational functions respectively.

The line of meaning along which the clause is structured as a message is called the "thematic structure" (Halliday / Matthiessen 2004: 64-65):

In English, as in many other languages, the clause is organized as a message by having a distinct status assigned to one part of it. One part of the clause is enunciated as the theme; this then combines with the remainder so that the two parts together constitute a message. [...] The Theme is the element which serves as the point of departure of the message; it is that which locates and orients the clause within its context. The remainder of the message, the part in which the Theme is developed, is called in Prague school terminology the Rheme. As a message structure, therefore, a clause consists of a Theme accompanied by a Rheme; and the structure is expressed by the order – whatever is chosen as the Theme is put first.

The theme is usually a participant – a noun phrase in the guise of actor, that is to say the subject of traditional grammar – but in some cases it may be a prepositional phrase functioning as adverbial, or a wh-clause within a cleft sentence; sometimes it is explicitly announced by such phrases as “As regards...”, or “As to...”, and at all events, it is clearly identifiable on account of the initial position it occupies in the clause.

Being a message, the clause is also an exchange. I will examine this functional configuration of the “clause as exchange” in some detail as it provides a distinction between “propositions” and “proposals” which may prove useful in my analysis, as well as an interesting interpretation of modality. The clause is an exchange in the sense that it is “an interactive event” (Halliday / Matthiessen 2004: 106) between speaker and audience, which may translate into a number of speech roles, the most basic being those of “giving” and “demanding”. These roles further decline into the providing or requiring of “goods-&-services” or “information”, that is to say the object of the exchange may either be something tangible such as a thing or an action, or something immaterial such as a piece of information (Halliday / Matthiessen 2004: 107-108):

If you say something to me with the aim of getting me to do something for you [...], the exchange commodity is strictly non-verbal: what is being demanded is an object or an action, and language is brought in to help the process along. This is an exchange of goods-&-services. But if you say something to me with the aim of getting me to tell you something [...], what is being demanded is information: language is the end as well as the means, and the only answer expected is a verbal one. This is an exchange of information. These two variables, when taken together, define the four primary speech functions of offer, command, statement and question. These, in turn, are matched by a set of desired responses: accepting an offer, carrying out a command, acknowledging a statement and answering a question.

Of the four responses to the basic speech functions, only “answering a question” is inherently verbal, while the other three are non-verbal in nature, though often accompanied by verbalization. A clause which functions semantically as an exchange of information – a statement or a question – is called by Halliday a “proposition”, something that can be affirmed or denied, whereas a clause functioning as an exchange of goods-&-services – an offer or command – is termed a “proposal” (Halliday / Matthiessen 2004: 110-111). The grammatical constituent which characterizes propositions is the Mood element, consisting in the combination of two components: the Subject, which is a nominal group, and the Finite operator, which is part of a verbal group. Within the indicative, which is the typical mood of propositions, the relative positions of Subject and Finite distinguish a declarative from an interrogative statement, while the remainder of the clause is called the Residue, consisting of the Predicator and a varying number of Complements and Adjuncts. The Finite verbal operator carries the features of

the systems of Polarity and Modality. The former is defined as “the opposition between positive and negative”, while the latter is glossed as “the speaker’s judgment, or request of judgment of the listener, on the status of what is being said” (Halliday / Matthiessen 2004: 146-147):

Polarity is thus a choice between yes and no. But these are not the only possibilities; there are intermediate degrees, various kinds of indeterminacy that fall in between, such as ‘sometimes’ or ‘maybe’. These intermediate degrees, between the positive and negative poles, are known collectively as MODALITY. What the modality system does is to construe the region of uncertainty that lies between ‘yes’ and ‘no’. But there is more than one route between the two. In between the certainties of ‘it is’ and ‘it isn’t’ lie the relative probabilities of ‘it must be’, ‘it will be’, ‘it may be’. Similarly, in between the definitive ‘do!’ and ‘don’t!’ lie the options ‘you must do’, ‘you should do’, ‘you may do’.

The space between positive and negative – what Halliday terms “modalization” – is differently occupied by propositions and proposals. The former structure modality on the basis of the degrees of probability (“possibly / probably / certainly”) and usuality (“sometimes / usually / always”), whereas the latter realize modality in commands, through degrees of obligation (“allowed to / supposed to / required to”), and in offers, through degrees of inclination (“willing to / anxious to / determined to”). These varieties of modality roughly correspond to the distinction in pragmatics between “epistemic modality” expressing probability and “deontic modality” expressing obligation (Halliday / Matthiessen 2004: 618).

The third mode of meaning which is traceable in a clause is the line of experiential construction (Halliday / Matthiessen 2004: 170):

Our most powerful impression of experience is that it consists of a flow of events, or ‘goings-on’. This flow of events is chunked into quanta of change by the grammar of the clause: each quantum of change is modeled as a figure – a figure of happening, doing, sensing, saying, being or having [...].

Figures basically consist of two elements: a process taking place in time and a varying number of participants. The grammatical system which organizes the various configurations of process and participants is the system of transitivity, which “construes the world of experience into a manageable set of **process** types” (Halliday / Matthiessen 2004: 170). In other words, the clause organizes experience into a number of process types, three of them being the basic models for understanding reality: material processes, which construe the outside world, mental processes, which represent the world “within”, the inner sphere of human consciousness, and relational processes, which identify and classify, thus relating fragments of our experience to each other.

4.2. Agentivity

The transitive model represents only one mode of representing reality through language. Halliday suggests a complementary way of construing experience, which he terms the “ergative” model. In it the dominant opposition is the one between “doing” and “happening” (Halliday / Matthiessen 2004: 282-285):

[...] the transitive model is based on the configuration of Actor + Process. The Actor is construed as bringing about the unfolding of the Process through time; and this unfolding is either confined in its outcome to the Actor or extended to another participant, the Goal. The Goal is construed as being impacted by the Actor’s performance of the Process. [...] In the ergative model [...] the difference between ‘doing’ and ‘happening’ derives from a different principle from the transitive one of extension-and-impact: ‘happening’ means that the actualization of the process is represented as being self-engendered, whereas ‘doing’ means that the actualization of the process is represented as being caused by a participant that is external to the combination of Process + Medium. This external cause is the **Agent**.

In the ergative model the quantum of change is represented either as having been originated by an external identifiable force, termed the Agent, or as having, so to say, originated itself. An interesting interplay between lexis and grammar along what Halliday calls the lexico-grammatical cline is the great number of ergative / non-ergative pairs of verbs which can be used both with and without indication of the Agent bringing about the process. English is rich in examples of such verbs: open, close, break, sell, show, etc. E. g. *Paul opened the door*, is non-ergative, while *the door opened*, is ergative. All processes are thus seen as variations on one and the same model, whose configuration only allows for the presence of either one or two participants: the Medium through which the process unfolds, which is realized by a nominal phrase denoting any type of animate or inanimate being, and, optionally, an Agent which caused the process to unfold. As opposed to the transitive pattern, which leaves the options to either represent Actor + Process or to figure out the extension of the process over a Goal, the ergative pattern construes reality either in terms of self-engendered processes, or as change induced by some agency in the outside world. The two visions, the transitive and the ergative one, have proved to be complementary in the English language, which has foregrounded one or the other according to register, historical circumstances and situation type.

Another possibility to efface agentivity from the clause is offered by the choice of voice. There are two ways of handling voice: one is typical of the transitive model and simply consists in a different allocation of the interpersonal roles of Subject and Adjunct, whereas voice in the ergative model modifies the construction of experience, providing the option of concealing agentivity by representing change as having produced itself out of an endogenous force. This effect is grammatically achieved through the use of the “middle” voice, which is neither active nor passive in that it carries no feature of agency, whether explicitly

or implicitly. An example would be *the glass broke*. Even a clause with agency, that is to say a clause in the “effective” voice, offers scope for a partial obliteration of the Agent, which can be left implicit if the “effective-receptive” voice is preferred to the “effective-operative” one. Operative and receptive are the two variants of the effective voice, which construes change as being produced by some external force, which, however, can be removed from the explicit configuration of the clause through the adoption of the receptive variant, characterized by the use of a passive verb. Examples of both middle and effective-receptive voice are found abundantly in the press, whenever the author of the article shows no inclination to emphasize agentivity in the report of reputation-menacing events, which are more conveniently represented as “happenings” than “doings”.

A study of voice and of the system of transitivity in institutional reports may shed some light on the underlying semantic structures and on the subtle choice of strategies for the realization of what Halliday calls the “meaning potential”. In particular, if a tendency was noticed to remove both an explicit and an implicit indication of agents from the configuration of processes of change – through the adoption of the ergative model and the consequent obliteration of the causes of socio-economic phenomena – this would suggest an inclination to conceal individual responsibilities for the coming about of conflicts and situations of unfair distribution of resources, represented as uncontrollable “happenings” rather than manageable “doings”.

Analysis will narrow down on the introductory *Forewords* or *Messages* from the Director-General of the relevant organization. The reason for the choice of this close-up is the need to deal with shorter texts, profitably turned into objects of accurate scrutiny, which would be impossible with a corpus running into millions of types. The choice has fallen on the *Forewords* – titled *Messages* in *WHRs* – on account of the similarity in their format. More importantly, the texts selected for closer examination truly epitomize the institutional reports they preface both in topic coverage and in textual profile, though clearly the focus does not coincide with that of the larger texts including them. As a matter of fact, while the ideational dimension of language dominates the reports proper, the interpersonal component of communication is the key element of these letter-like introductory texts (Garzone 2004), which enjoy the double status of parts of longer discursive products and of discursive entities in their own right. Thus a subcorpus will be constructed consisting of the *Forewords* to each edition of the reports making up the three larger subcorpora.

An exploration of texts in this subcorpus with a view to analyzing fine linguistic features involving deep syntax and lexico-grammatical choices may lead to important discoveries about what appears to be a highly predictable stereotyped language (Rist 2002), whose typified style and recurrent metaphors

point in the direction of strong standardization in the genre. Thus, CDA and systemic-functional grammar may open up promising areas of stylistic study to genre analysis, integrating a search for rhetorical moves with a scanning of texts aiming to trace recurrent stylistic features. In particular, a study of agentivity and of the collocation of certain verbs and of their grammatical patterning may contribute to uncovering the ideational dimension (Halliday / Matthiessen 2004) of the reports drafted by international organizations, thus providing the key to deciphering their construction of socio-economic reality and the aim they serve in construing reality the way they do, as well as possible gaps between envisaged purposes and underlying self-legitimizing and self-reproducing aims.

The analytical tools described in this chapter will be deployed in this research on institutional language and discourse aiming to explore the discursive strategies adopted by international organizations in their practice of periodical reporting on a variety of issues, including problems faced and activities implemented in an attempt to pursue each organization's mandate. Integrating various methodological approaches into a multifocal method of analysis appears to be the only viable option, given the complex nature of discourse, consisting in a multifaceted reality which well reflects the dynamism and complexity of social reality.

Chapter IV

The reports of international organizations: a textual perspective

1. Institutional reports: an orchestration of text types?

In this chapter I will analyze the textual profile emerging from a close reading of institutional reports, which will be examined in search of text types, occurring both as separate text divisions, as Werlich calls them (Werlich 1983), and in partial overlap with other units. The effort to disentangle this intricate textual pattern answers the need to correctly interpret the ideational dimension (Halliday / Matthiessen 2004) of these texts, which appear to consist in a subtle alternation of propositions and proposals. The underlying hypothesis is that the shift from proposition to proposal serves the purpose of aptly turning present failure into aims to be pursued, thus conveniently dressing up setbacks as challenges. In this way the impotence of the International Community in the face of the great evils afflicting mankind is more palatably represented as success to be achieved in the hopefully near, though rarely specified, future. The uncovering of representational strategies may be conducive to a correct decoding of institutional reports in terms of communicative purpose, which will be the object of closer scrutiny in chapter VI.

The term “reports” is used in Werlich’s text grammar (Werlich 1983) to define a textual category which is clearly distinct from that identified by the same noun handled as a genre analytical label. So when for example Bhatia explores what he calls “the colony of reporting genres”, he is referring to a system of genres all sharing some fundamental features (Bhatia 2004), whereas Werlich attaches the label “report” to a text form consisting in the combination of two text types: narration and instruction, with a prevalence of narrative sections and an instructive close of variable length. The style is often formal or technical, in accord with the objective nature of reportorial narration. The choice of person tends to privilege both the personal and the non-personal third person, as well as the first person plural, while the tense systems focus on the Past Tense and occasionally on the Present Tense groups. The thematic text base is an action-recording sentence, whereas sequence forms are of the temporal, listing and general-to-particular type.

One of the text forms consisting in reports is represented by institutional papers, in the first place those bearing the definition “report” in their denomination. Of the three subcorpora, the second and third consist of

institutional texts which are labelled *The World Health Report* and *World Trade Report* respectively. Below this main title, they all carry the year of publication and a subtitle, which varies in each edition according to the topic or topics covered. On the contrary, the first subcorpus is made up of texts titled *The State of Food Insecurity in the World*, plus the year of publication and a subtitle. Although in this case the title does not contain the label “report”, the noun “state” clearly defines a typological category which largely coincides with that denoted by the other term, the only difference lying in the implication of static, therefore descriptive quality which is suggested by the word “state”. However, all three subcorpora share in the composite nature of textual organization. Due to the considerable length of texts and the multiplicity of communicative purposes they serve, there is no single text in the corpus that perfectly fits into one text typology. Both a chronological examination of the corpus and a contrastive study of subcorpora will be adopted with a view to profiling texts in typological terms. The working hypothesis here is that the institutional reports under analysis may be complex textual products, resulting from the juxtaposition and partial superimposition of text types. The shift from one text type to another is usually signalled by a change in tense, in the handling of modality and sometimes in person. Also, descriptive and narrative text types share some fundamental features as they both focus on factual phenomena – occasionally in the case of narration on conceptual phenomena as well. The difference only lies in the context – spatial for description, temporal for narration – which determines the different use of tenses. Instructive texts stand apart in that they focus on the composition of future behaviour in both the encoder and the decoder. Moreover, the “thematic text base”, which offers the basis for “thematic expansion”, is “a simple phenomenon-registering sentence” in descriptive texts and “a simple action-recording sentence” in narrative texts, while in instructive texts the same function is performed by “an action-demanding sentence”. The partial similarity between descriptive and narrative text types, which both provide factual accounts of observable states or changes in reality, is the reason for their frequent mixing. Instructive texts tend to be more monolithic, although text type mixing and embedding does occasionally involve instruction too.

We will now examine the text type profile emerging from texts in each subcorpus, focusing on those aspects which characterize textual typologies or contribute to their identification. In particular, the delineation of textual units will rely on the empirical isolation of the thematic text base and of the prevalent tense groups alongside with an empirical definition of the dominant contextual focus.

2. 1. Textual profile of *The State of Food Insecurity in the World*

A close reading of the twelve issues of *The State of Food Insecurity in the World* has shown them to be a fairly balanced mixture of description, narration and

instruction, with a number of expository sections interspersed in the texts whenever there is need to provide explication for some concept or technicality. Description tends to open *The State of Food Insecurity in the World* with statistical up-dates about undernutrition and malnutrition around the globe, followed by narrative sections parading all victorious feats in the battle against hunger and enumerating the many cases of extreme poverty and food insecurity still afflicting an unacceptably large number of human beings and ample areas of the Planet. Explicit instruction is usually confined to the closing chapter or section – depending on the issue – which brings together the various textual strands and confers completion on what globally stands out as a report of the progress and setbacks on the way to a hunger-free world.

The *Foreword* by the Director-General, which prefaces every single issue of the document, can be considered to be an integral part of the longer *State of Food Insecurity in the World* – from now on referred to as *SOFI*. If thus regarded, the *Foreword* represents an explicit, at times even emphatic instructive opening, which turns instruction into a circular framework encapsulating the central portion of the reports under analysis. At the same time, the *Foreword* represents a microtext in its full right, endowed as it is with coherence and completion, in other words with what Werlich indicates as the criteria for textuality. It is indeed comparable in its function and structure to the CEO's Letter introducing Company reports¹. As an example it is worth quoting the *Foreword* to the 1999 issue in full:

(1) Foreword

Towards the World Food Summit target Three years ago, leaders from 186 countries gathered in Rome and made a solemn commitment – to halve the number of hungry people by the year 2015. Is the world living up to the promise it made at the 1996 World Food Summit? New estimates for 1995/97 show that around 790 million people in the developing world do not have enough to eat. This is more than the total populations of North America and Europe combined. The “continent” of the hungry includes men, women and children who may never reach their full physical and mental potential because they do not have enough to eat – many of them may even die because they have been denied the basic human right to food. This state of affairs is unacceptable. Yes, the number of undernourished people has decreased by 40 million since 1990/92, the period to which the estimates of 830 to 840 million cited at the Summit refer. But we cannot afford to be complacent. A closer look at the data reveals that in the first half of this decade a group of only 37 countries achieved reductions totalling 100 million. Across the rest of the developing world, the number of hungry people actually increased by almost 60 million. The current rate of progress – an average reduction of around 8 million a year – falls squarely within the trajectory of “business as usual”. If the pace is not stepped up, more than 600 million people will still go to sleep hungry in the developing countries in 2015. To achieve the Summit goal, a much faster rate of progress is required, averaging reductions of at least 20 million a year in the developing world. Hunger is often associated with developing

¹ For Company reports and CEO's Letters see Garzone 2004 ;2008; de Groot 2011.

countries. While that is true, this report provides statistical evidence that the problem is not limited to developing countries. For the first time, FAO presents aggregate estimates of the number of undernourished in developed countries. The resulting figure, 34 million people, confirms that even developed countries are confronted with the challenge of overcoming food insecurity. Although many of these 34 million people live in countries that have been undergoing major political and economic transition in the 1990s, pockets of hunger are to be found in all parts of the world. It is my conviction that there is no reason not to have a hunger-free world some time in the next century. The world already produces enough food to feed the people who inhabit it today. And it could produce more. However, unless deliberate action is taken at all levels, the chances are that hunger and malnutrition will continue in the foreseeable future. But, before effective action can be taken, we need to know who the hungry and vulnerable are, where they live, and why they have not been able to improve their situations. The numbers are 790 million in developing countries, and 34 million in developed countries, but we must put faces on the numbers. Whether it is the victims of civil conflict or herders who suffer because their pastureland is disappearing, whether it is the urban poor living on national welfare or the geographically isolated ethnic minorities, we cannot forget that they are human beings, with individual needs and aspirations. In poor villages and neighbourhoods across the world, the scene is the same: people working from sunrise to sunset dealing with harsh climates, tired earth and the effects of fragile economies, labouring constantly to provide for themselves and their families – striving for little more than enough food to keep themselves alive. That is why we must focus not only on abstract global numbers but on the faces and places that make up those numbers. In calculations and predictions that use variables of population growth, output rates, declining resource bases, political changes, devastation from diseases or the effects of natural and manmade disasters, we must always remember that we are talking about people – individuals who, given the chance, have the potential to make significant contributions to the world around them. But in order to reach their potential, they need and deserve a life free from hunger.

New technologies allow us to link national information systems and establish global networks, to examine an entire ocean or one drop of water, to punch buttons and create graphs and flow charts that show us instantly and clearly the kind of progress being made. Knowledge not only gives us power, it gives us insight and direction. With the establishment of the Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information and Mapping Systems (FIVIMS) initiative, we are expanding our ability to gather, analyse and share knowledge that can guide future initiatives to increase access to food for all.

The work of FIVIMS is essential as we enter the new millennium. We must devise and put into action policies and programmes to enable governments, international and nongovernmental organizations, communities and individuals to

overcome the obstacles that stand in the way of what should be a birthright for every one of the 6 000 million people on this planet – enough to eat. As we have seen, the progress being made against hunger in the world is uneven. It is clear that there is no global formula for success. The success must come from specific actions undertaken and goals set at the local, national and regional levels, where individuals will be able to see the impact of their involvement. In the absence of new investment and policy efforts at all levels, current technological and socioeconomic trends are likely to continue.

The number of undernourished people may continue to decline ... but only slowly and only in some regions of the world. Deliberate and targeted measures and new investments are fundamental to improve the trend. The reduction to 790 million hungry people in the developing countries is a beginning. Our stated goal is to reduce that number, at the minimum, to around 400 million by 2015, as well as to reduce by half or more the number of 34 million hungry in developed countries. But as we work towards the goal, we must remain aware that we cannot stop when we reach it. Because, even that number is far too big. Even one hungry person is one too many.

Jacques Diouf

Director-General FAO

(*Foreword to SOFI 1999*)

A close reading of this letter-like introduction to the *State of Food Insecurity* reveals a striking resemblance with the textual structure of the CEO's Letter analyzed by Garzone (2004). In particular, both text forms highlight the central role of narration and instruction in the realization of the three rhetorical moves which Garzone identifies in the generic pattern underlying CEO's Letters (Garzone 2004: 321) and which can be traced also in the *Forewords*:

- (2) 1. reporting on Company's performance, trends and results in the relevant year;
2. providing a narrative of salient facts (events, operations, figures);
3. illustrating outlook and priorities for the future.

Although like CEO's Letters, *Forewords* alternate narration and instruction, within the textual architecture of the longer texts they preface they have a primarily instructive function, thus providing a directive – or better, self-directive – and commissive opening.

An examination of *SOFIs* from a chronological perspective yields interesting results as to their textual profile, which reveals considerable variability in the central part of the corpus. As a matter of fact, the reports drawn between 2001 and 2005 show great alternation from description to narration and instruction throughout the whole text, which is evidenced by the frequent shift from epistemic to deontic modality. On the contrary, in the latest editions there seems to be a return to the straightforward structure of preliminary instruction in the *Foreword*, followed by description, narration and instructive close in the body of the report, with occasional mixing of narrative and descriptive units.

As often happens in so many discourse areas, *SOFIs* reveal a combination of information-giving and action-demanding units (Fairclough 2003; Halliday / Mathiessen 2004), which accounts for the variety of text types to be found in this subcorpus. Variability, however, does not extend over argumentation, which is apparently absent from these texts. It has been argued that reports drawn by international organizations typically exclude argumentation from the range of

textual varieties they incorporate (Rist 2002) out of a deliberate choice to confer the status of axioms on implicitly averred propositions as well as generally accepted platitudes, which are in no need of being argued for by virtue of their inherently uncontroversial nature. This consensus-generating absence of argumentation really seems to be a recurrent feature of the institutional reports published by FAO, which are extremely poor in such connectors as “thus”, “therefore” and similar markers of consequentiality and syllogistic reasoning. It is true, logical links are often engendered by the mere juxtaposition of clauses or sentences and do not necessarily require a connector. For this reason automatic queries are of little use to evidence the presence or absence of those links, and the intercoder reliability test has proved the only resource that could be accessed to reduce the degree of subjectivity of the analysis carried out.

A close reading examination of *SOFIs* has shown the opening chapter after the *Foreword* to be clearly dominated by the Present Tense group, which reappears in combination with the Past Tense in the following chapters, to finally surface accompanied by modal operators expressing deontic modality or within hypothetical hypotaxis in the instructive close. A different tense pattern emerges from the reports published between 2001 and 2005, which are characterized by a constant alternation of Present and Past tenses throughout the whole text. This continuous shift from one tense group to another and, within one tense, from the simple to the progressive aspect is an indication of textual variability, which is confirmed by the shifting contextual focus, moving from space to time and future action. Sequence forms also show an alternation from spatial to temporal and listing forms.

2.2. Textual profile of *The World Health Report*

The *World Health Reports* appear to be an orchestration of text types, identifiable either as whole chapters or as single sections. Variation in text typology is partly linked to thematic heterogeneity, which marks both the whole series of reports and each text. The titles of the twelve editions range from suggestion of medical problems and target groups for WHO action to the management of health systems. As to thematic heterogeneity within individual reports, the main reason for it is the need to deal with a number of medical conditions and to feature viable therapeutic strategies. An example is the *WHR* for the year 1999, where the chapter headings reveal the variety of medical problems tackled: Part one. Making a difference in people’s lives: Achievements and challenges. Chapter 1: Health and development in the 20th century. Chapter 2: The double burthen: Emerging epidemics and persistent problems. Part two. Making a difference in the 21st century. Chapter 3: Meeting the challenges: health systems development. Chapter 4: Rolling back malaria. Chapter 5: Combating the tobacco epidemic. Chapter 6: Making a difference.

The ample coverage of topics is reflected in the dynamism of the text type profile, which in all editions alternates description, narration and instruction in an almost modular pattern. Within the rapid succession characterizing the distribution of text types, a striking feature is the dissemination – often within larger narrative or descriptive units – of expository paragraphs or sections, which usually define and analyze medical conditions or problematic situations and are followed by instructions as to how governments should best deal with either. Elements of argumentation are sometimes interspersed in the expository sections, as when in chapter I of the 1999 report a causal link is shown to connect health and economic productivity². However, explicit argumentation is usually avoided as relations between concepts tend to be represented either as factual phenomena or as elements of an ampler conceptual whole rather than in their guise of arguable statements; the textual structures of description and exposition seem to prevail over those of argumentation, at least on the level of explicit meaning. The link between health and economic and social development as well as the role of health and general well-being in people’s personal quality of life is either encapsulated within presuppositions³ or unemphatically mentioned as a taken-for-granted platitude.

In some cases the vein of underlying argumentation surfaces in a peculiarly ambiguous manner, as in the 2003 report. Here chapter 7 subtly juxtaposes description, narration, exposition and instruction to explore existing health systems and to envisage “principled integrated care” as the best option for the ideal health system of the – hopefully near – future. In spite of its complex textual profile, the whole chapter consists in an attempt to persuade the audience of the leading role of the primary health care principles – as laid down in the Alma-Ata Declaration of 1978 – in the struggle to improve health status on a global level:

- (3) To deal with the increasing burden of chronic diseases, both noncommunicable and communicable, requires upstream health promotion and disease prevention in the community as well as downstream disease management within health care services. Two integrated health care models, the chronic care model and its extension – WHO’s innovative care for chronic conditions framework – promote primary health care concepts: intersectoral partnerships, community participation and seamless population-based care. Evidence supports the use of these integrated models as a means of implementing primary health care principles, with demonstrated reduction in health care costs, lower use of health care services, and improved health status. (*WHR* 2003)

“Evidence” is said to “support” the usefulness of the integration of two health care models – the chronic care model and its extension – and a reduction in health care

² Lexical items stemming from the root ‘argu-’ totally amount to only 0.01 % of the subcorpus, which, however, may not be particularly revealing of the role of argumentation in *WHRs* on account of the great variety of linguistic markers for argumentative textual structures.

³ For argumentation trapped in presupposition, see Degano 2008.

costs is vaguely reported to have been “demonstrated”, with no indication of who demonstrated what and in what way. An even more ambiguous argumentative strand can be detected in the opening of chapter I in the 2005 edition *Make every mother and child count*:

- (4) Mothers and children matter – so does their health. The healthy future of society depends on the health of the children of today and their mothers, who are guardians of that future. However, despite much good work over the years, 10.6 million children and 529 000 mothers are still dying each year, mostly from avoidable causes. (*WHR* 2005)

The first sentence is a statement, consisting in the averral of two propositions: the fact that mothers and children count and the equation of their value with the value of their health. The second sentence announces a third axiom: the inextricable link between the health status of future generations and the health of today’s mothers and children. The causal link between the two is not demonstrated or discussed in any way: it is simply stated as a self-evident truth which requires no arguing in its favour. What follows in the quoted example is the narration of progress and setbacks in maternal and pediatric health over the years.

The strong flavour of persuasion lingers in the reader’s mind after reading these texts, imbued as they are with the evaluative taste of argumentation, though unattired in the garments of syllogistic reasoning. Argumentation, whether implicit or in disguise, is usually conducive to instruction. No abstract theorizing is conducted in *WHRs*: rather the analysis of the medical needs of the international community leads to an inevitable call to arms, which however tends to shade off into a face-saving (Brown / Levinson 1987) indirect pointing to the desirability of taking immediate action. A recurrent trait of instructive pieces in these texts is their pivoting on deontic modality as opposed to epistemic or zero modality, which dominates description, narration, exposition and argumentation. A study of modality in *WHRs* may therefore shed precious light on their textual organization (see Chapter V, § 2).

2.3. Textual profile of the *World Trade Report*

A close reading of the *World Trade Reports* (*WTRs*) reveals a different textual pattern to that emerging from the *State of Food Insecurity around the World* and *The World Health Report*. The series of nine texts published yearly by the World Trade Organization between 2003 and 2011 is labelled “report” by the issuing authority, namely the Secretariat, and actually shows a typical trait of reportorial writing in its inherently narrative nature. However, narration tends to only dominate the first part of *World Trade Reports*, which invariably fall into a preliminary epistemically modalized narrative of trends in trade either worldwide or in one or more regions and an unmodalized expository study – in some cases more than one study, in the form of thematic essays – on theoretical questions or

potentially problematic issues. Thus, narration of trading practices over the last few years and of negotiations for new rules in trade occupies the introductory chapter or chapters and is interspersed with short descriptive units, while the bulk of each report is represented by an attempt at interpreting facts through the presentation of economic theories whose applicability to the phenomena under analysis is not really argued for: it is rather implied by their very enumeration.

The second part of *WTRs* therefore consists in expository chapters in which theoretical issues are tackled from a multi-perspective angle through the indication of several experts' analytical models. The exposition of these models is carried out with the help of paraphrase and quotations, and different theoretical approaches are usually juxtaposed with complete omission of any overt comment, so that all attempt to show either endorsement or rejection of those theories is regularly avoided and argumentation never explicitly encroaches on exposition. Thus the 2003 report indirectly establishes a causal relationship between growth and development by pointing to the link connecting human development and economic resources, which is represented as a line on a chart accompanying the text:

- (5) A good education system, a healthy diet, safe water and good health services all require considerable economic resources. Economic growth can generate the resources necessary to meet these development challenges. The link between human development and the availability of economic resources is reflected in Chart IIA.1. The chart plots countries' ranking on the Human Development Index (HDI) constructed by UNDP against GDP per capita. The HDI ranks countries according to their performance in relation to health, education and income. Since income per capita has a weight of one third in the index, one should expect correlation between the HDI and GDP per capita, but the chart clearly indicates that health and education are also closely correlated with income. (*WTR* 2003)

The chart is followed by the following remark: "The chart suggests that human and economic development often move in concert." There is only room for suggestion prompted by visual input, while all dialectical reasoning, whether inductive or deductive, is excluded and no evidence is provided to support the given thesis. Another example of the expository presentation of theoretical models in the absence of articulate argumentation in favour of one or the other can be found in the 2004 report:

- (6) Trade and macroeconomic variables are inter-related through a set of formal economic linkages. These relations form a macroeconomic system of an open economy which identifies a set of conditions necessary to maintain the economy in equilibrium (Box IIA.1). The link between trade and macroeconomic variables stems from the so-called fundamental macroeconomic identity which, in turn, constitutes the basis for a theory known as the "absorption model". The absorption model is frequently combined with another theoretical framework known as the "monetary model" which provides a foundation for the monetary approach to the balance of payments. The absorption model links macroeconomic variables

such as consumption, savings, investment and income with the external balances (typically the current account). These relations describe the “real” side of the economy. The monetary model then links the domestic real variables with monetary variables. Some aspects of these models are controversial, but they are founded in strong theory and continue to be fundamental in the provision of policy advice, especially in the context of IMF conditionality (*WTR* 2004)

Here again pointing to a box with data showing the relations which create a macroeconomic system substitutes all argumentative effort to demonstrate the existence of such relations. The “absorption model” and the “monetary model” are introduced in inverted commas, but no references are provided. So while the source remains mysterious, the two models appear to have been entextualized⁴ from the work of some anonymous analyst, with no possibility for the reader to check the authenticity of the models, which are thus intertextually incorporated into the text. Their validity is consolidated by the authoritativeness which is conferred on them by their presentation as the fruit of established research. Some controversial aspects are fleetingly hinted at, but they are promptly dismissed by a categorical statement which places the models in question beyond all need for a rational defense: they are declared to be “founded in strong theory.”

Sometimes exposition is interspersed with narration, which either functions as evidence to the accuracy of the analysis expounded in the expository sections or as factual interlude between analytical units. An example is provided by *WTR* 2007, which entirely consists in a superimposition of narrative and expository units, or by *WTR* 2008, whose part II introduces a study on globalizing trade in expository-narrative terms:

- (7) While there is no universally agreed definition of globalization, economists typically use the term to refer to international integration in commodity, capital and labour markets (Bordo et al., 2003). Using integration in these markets as the benchmark, it is clear that globalization is not a new phenomenon. Since the mid-19th century, there have been at least two episodes of globalization (Baldwin and Martin, 1999). (*WTR* 2008)

What follows is a narrative of these two episodes of globalization and of post-World-War-II trends in globalizing trade. No attempt is made to explore the varying definitions of globalization and to opt for one of them. The fact that globalization is no new phenomenon is represented to be “clear”, therefore self-evident and consequently in no need of demonstration of any kind. Thus scientific argumentation is regularly excluded from these texts, which is rather surprising if one considers the amount of theoretical thinking which is introduced in the *World Trade Reports*. The obvious nature of economics as an atypical science which cannot avail itself of any consolidated method for an objective verification of research results and only provides scope for subjective interpretations of an

4 On entextualization, see Blommaert 2005.

elusive object of analysis, namely economic reality, does not fully account for this absence of argumentation, which is rather explained by the need of such a negotiating forum as the World Trade Organization to avoid all controversy and embrace the role of neutral mouthpiece of member countries.

The purpose of *WTRs*, which is stated by the Secretary-General in more or less the same words in the *Foreword* to each edition, is very revealing of both the institutional aims of the WTO and of the reason why no position is taken as to the many questions which are tackled in the reports:

- (8) The World Trade Report is a new annual publication produced by the WTO Secretariat. Each year, the WTR will explore trends in world trade and highlight important issues in the world trading system. In addition to monitoring and interpreting trade developments, the Report seeks to deepen public understanding of pressing policy issues. The WTR does not pretend to provide comprehensive answers to complex and many-sided questions subject to continuing debate among governments and their constituencies. Rather, by explaining the origin of issues and offering an analytical framework within which to address them, the WTR aims to contribute to more informed discussion and a better appreciation of the options available to address policy challenges. (*WTR 2003*)

The discussion is thus envisaged as a by-product rather than an integral part of the *World Trade Report*, that is to say as generated by the reading of the WTO's annual publication.

Strangely enough for texts which by virtue of their definition as “reports” should include an instructive close, *WTRs* are characterized by a decided scarcity of instructive units, which is evidenced by a clear prevalence of epistemic over deontic modality. Instructive units are embedded in the closing section/s of the final chapter/s – “Challenges ahead” or “Present and future challenges”– while seminal traces of instruction are regularly found in the introductory *Foreword*, which, however, mostly features as a metadiscursive anticipation on the content structure of the report itself rather than as an instructive pleading in favour of some global cause. As the nature and purpose of the WTO's Director-General's *Foreword* differs from that of the *Foreword* and *Message* introducing FAO's and WHO's reports, so does its textual structure⁵, which embeds elements of instruction within narrative or expository text divisions.

This examination of the text type profile emerging from the three subcorpora has yielded interesting results converging on common conclusions, namely that these institutional reports, despite the typological label attached to them, are in fact the product of text type mixing and embedding, with a prevalence of narration,

5 Another original feature of *WTRs* lies in the choice to embed an Executive Summary, therefore an expository text in its full right, into each edition, immediately before the body of the WTR.

description and instruction, but also showing traces of expository strategies and occasional touches of argumentative reasoning.

All these texts are a balanced alternation of propositions and proposals, carefully poising the presentation of results obtained in the pursual of the organization's mandate against setbacks, which tend to be clothed in the convenient garments of results to be attained in future, rather than in their less exalting guise as evidence for failure. The handling of modality, with its shifts from zero to epistemic modalization when reporting about results to deontic modality when accounting for unattained goals, represents a promising area of study, one that through its focus on the interpersonal dimension of communication may shed precious light on the unavowed purposes of self-enactment and self-legitimization apparently pursued by international organizations. Another feature that may reveal the dynamics of self-representation, springing as it does from the interpersonal metafunction of language, is the pragmatic category of person. These two strategic elements in the textualisation of institutional discourse will be examined in the next chapter with a view to exploring the dialogic dimension of the meaning-making process.

Before moving on to the analysis of person and modality, I will examine another crucial aspect of the language used in institutional reports, namely the contextual variety of English they deploy. As a matter of fact, they strike the analyst with their aptness to appropriate the qualities of a Language for Specific Purposes (henceforth LSP), in a dynamic process of "technologization of discourse", as Fairclough terms it (Fairclough 1995a).

3. Technologization and popularization of institutional discourse

There is a feature of textualization the study of which may lead to interesting findings: the tendency, appreciated through a close reading of the three subcorpora, to progressively raise the level of specialization of the language used in institutional reports. Fairclough understands this "technologization" of discourse, which he has traced in the discursive practices of various professional communities, to be instrumental to the consolidation of power relationships in society (Fairclough 1995a). This phenomenon, observed in the texts under analysis, may shed some light on the area of covert communicative purposes, if any, in the periodical reports issued by international organizations and will therefore be studied in this section, alongside with another phenomenon pointing in the opposite direction, namely the tendency to popularize specialized discourse so as to make it accessible to a wide audience, ideally consisting in layman readers as well as experts.

3.1. Discourse specialization in *SOFI*

A chronological study of *SOFIs* shows an increasing degree of specialization which gradually turns the variety of English used in these texts into a Language for Specific Purposes – usually referred to as LSP. This progressive specialization of discourse surfaces both in lexical choices and in a number of syntactical patterns which are not specific to LSPs, but generally occur more frequently in specialized discourse. The first issue of *SOFI* reveals a preference for general English, except for a few mildly technical terms such as “undernourishment”, “undernutrition”, “food insecurity”, “vulnerability” and “anthropometry”, whose meaning is always clarified by the context. On the contrary, the reports issued between 2009 and 2011 teem with technicalities, above all from the domain of economic English, and show a clear tendency towards the de-personalization of discourse, for example through frequent recourse to the use of the passive voice (Gotti 2003; 2008). This strategic handling of voice can be noticed in many post Millennium editions:

- (9) More than three quarters of all child deaths are caused⁶ by neonatal disorders and a handful of treatable infectious diseases, including diarrhoea, pneumonia, malaria and measles. And well over half of these deaths can be traced to the increased vulnerability of children who are undernourished and underweight. [...] But if underweight had been reduced at the rate seen in the other regions, child mortality in sub-Saharan Africa would have fallen much more rapidly. (*SOFI* 2004)
- (10) Even if the MDG target were to be reached by 2015, the WFS target would still be far from being met (see box). In order to attain the WFS target in the developing countries, the number of undernourished people must be reduced by 31 million per year between 2001–03 and 2015. (*SOFI* 2006)
- (11) To ensure that hunger is conquered in the years to come, developing countries must be assisted with the development [...] Investments in food and agricultural science and technology need to be stepped up. [...] Whenever possible, efforts should be integrated and produce a multiplier effect. (*SOFI* 2009)
- (12) Twenty-two countries are currently considered to be in protracted crisis. Protracted crisis situations are characterized by recurrent natural disasters and/or conflict, longevity of food crises, breakdown of livelihoods and insufficient institutional capacity to react to the crises. Countries in protracted crisis thus need to be considered as a special category with special requirements in terms of interventions by the development community. (*SOFI* 2010)
- (13) The rice crisis was not caused by any problems in the basic balance between production and consumption. (*SOFI* 2011)

The use of the passive is instrumental to a de-focusing of the reader’s attention from the agent and is typical of specialized discourse. Another syntactic strategy

⁶ My emphasis.

which contributes to both de-personalization and specialization of discourse is nominalization, a tendency to make recourse to nouns rather than verb forms, with a consequent semantic unloading of the verbs – often reduced to mere copulas – and a more effective thematic structuring of the sentence (Gotti 2003). The use of this technique can be found in many post Millennium issues, for example in the report drafted in 2001:

- (14) Clearly, there has been a slowdown in the reduction of undernourished in the world. [...] The overall decline in the number of undernourished in the developing regions hides contrasting trends in different countries: only 32 of the 99 developing countries studied recorded a decrease in their numbers of undernourished between 1990-92 and 1997-99. The total reduction achieved by this group amounted to 116 million people. [...] The decrease in the proportion of undernourished in these countries has not been sufficient to offset the effect of population growth. (SOFI 2001)

Frequent recourse to nominalizing syntax can be found in subsequent editions:

- (15) Where prevalence of hunger is high, mortality rates for infants and children under five are also high, and life expectancy is low. [...] The correlation between chronic hunger and higher mortality rates remains striking. (SOFI 2002)
- (16) They were facing a new kind of emergency, in which severe short-term food shortages overlap an unprecedented collapse of health, agricultural production and food security (SOFI 2003)
- (17) The reversal during the second half of the decade resulted mainly from changes in China and India. (SOFI 2004)
- (18) Sustained economic growth leading to increased productivity and prosperity at the national level will result in reduced hunger. [...] Cross-country analyses conducted across the developing world suggest, however, that economic growth alone, in the absence of specific measures to combat hunger, may leave large numbers of hungry people behind (SOFI 2005)
- (19) Public investment in infrastructure, agricultural research, education and extension is indispensable for promoting agricultural growth. Actual public expenditures on agriculture in many poor countries do not reflect the importance of the sector, particularly in those with high prevalence of undernourishment. (SOFI 2006)
- (20) Going beyond simple balance between global food needs and availability, a question that is central for food security concerns relates to who participates in the short- and long-term response of agriculture to high food prices and in meeting future food needs. (SOFI 2008)

Nominalization dominates the later issues:

- (21) A reduction in capital inflows will mean that consumption must be reduced. [...] Rapid population and labour-force expansion combined with inadequate domestic growth has stretched the capacity of the economy to absorb workers. (SOFI 2009)

- (22) Poor governance and lack of resources and capacities affect both the provision of public services and households' abilities to invest in education and health care. This has negative implications for both mothers and children, most notably in the form of high levels of maternal mortality. (*SOFI* 2010)
- (23) Price volatility on international markets can sometimes be caused by domestic market intervention policies. [...] The rice crisis was not caused by any problems in the basic balance between production and consumption. First, rice production kept pace with increases in demand in the years before the crisis, and there were no major supply shocks in 2007/08. (*SOFI* 2011)

As shown in the quoted examples, the extensive recourse to nominalization endows the text with great density and compactness since de-verbal nouns condense whole clauses and even sentences into nominal phrases.

As far as lexis is concerned, the tendency towards a domain-specific use of English is already prominent in the second edition of *SOFI*. Thus goes the caption to one of the maps interspersed within the text of the 2000 *SOFI* report:

- (24) The depth of hunger is measured by the average dietary energy deficit of undernourished people – not of the population as a whole – expressed in kilocalories per person per day. (*SOFI* 2000)

Phrases like “body mass index”, “stunting”, “wasting”, “dietary energy supply”, “macronutrients”, “micronutrients” are widely used in this issue, which clearly steers in the direction of specialization of discourse.

A great deal of specialized terms are preferred to vaguer forms, yet all lexical items belonging to some specialized variety of the language are regularly defined or otherwise explained, as shown in the quote. Indeed, domain-specific discourse is popularized and the techniques used are those typical of scientific popularization, in particular denomination, definition and explication (Calsamiglia / van Dijk 2004; Garzone 2006). Sometimes explication is provided by the use of synonymous phrases. An example can be found in the title to the section of the 2000 issue including the above mentioned map, which reads: “Depth of hunger: how hungry are the hungry?”. The same phrase is coupled with an exact definition: “Depth of hunger: number of kilocalories missing from the diets of the undernourished”, and in another part of the chapter it is paraphrased as: “The depth of hunger, or food deficit”. The “prevalence of hunger” is defined as “the percentage of the population whose food intake falls below the minimum requirement”, while “malnutrition” is described as “the entire range of problems that can occur when dietary energy and/or nutrient intake are insufficient, excessive or simply imbalanced”. The term is further analyzed into the variety of meanings it may cover:

- (25) At one end of the malnutrition spectrum is the problem of undernourishment and undernutrition, often described in terms of macronutrients. Low dietary energy supply,

wasting, stunting, underweight and low body mass index (BMI) are all used to identify the problem. At the other end of the spectrum is the problem of overnourishment, leading to overweight and obesity. A high BMI is one indicator of the problem. (*SOFI* 2000)

Macronutrients and micronutrients also receive accurate definitions: “Macronutrients, the energy-providing food components [...] Micronutrients – minerals and vitamins – are needed for proper growth, development and function”. Slightly more specialized medical terms such as “iron deficiency anaemia”, “iodine deficiency disorders”, “vitamin A deficiency blindness”, “Calcium deficiency”, “osteoporosis” and “severe vitamin C deficiency” are incorporated in paragraphs which amply clarify their meaning. “Body mass index (BMI)” is glossed as “an anthropometric standard for defining the body composition of men and women” and further technical information is supplied in the form of a mathematical formula: “A person’s BMI score is calculated by dividing the individual's weight (in kilograms) by his or her height (in meters) squared: $BMI = \text{body weight (kg)} / \text{height}^2 \text{ (m)}$ ”.

The 2000 *SOFI* starts with a list of glossed acronyms, which facilitates the layman’s decoding effort. Another list of acronyms opens the 2001 report, while later editions introduce technical terms from other specialized varieties of the language, invariably accompanied by explanatory phrases. Moreover, a glossary is enclosed in the 2000 and 2001 reports, focusing on the definition of biomedical terms. The glossary added to the 2001 edition also includes words and phrases from economic discourse, like “Dollar purchasing power parity” and “Gini coefficient,” which are respectively defined as “the purchasing power of a country’s currency in relation to the US dollar; the number of units of a given currency required to purchase a basket of goods and services valued at US\$1 in the United States,” and “an aggregate numerical measure of income inequality ranging from 0 (perfect equality) to 1 (perfect inequality). The higher the value of the coefficient, the higher the inequality of income distribution; the lower the value, the more equitable the distribution of income”. Indeed, economic discourse plays a significant role in the post Millennium editions. In particular, the 2006, 2008 and 2009 reports abound in moderately specialized though transparent terms and glossed acronyms such as “ODA” (Official Development Aid), “GDP” (Gross Domestic Product), “LIFDC” (Low-Income Food-Deficit Countries), “MFIs” (Microfinance Institutions), “FDI” (Foreign Direct Investment) and “IMF” (International Monetary Fund). As regards the use of technicalities from other varieties of specialized discourse, the 2003 report introduces a number of terms stemming from meteorology and water management technology, like “erratic rains”, “high evaporation”, “flood irrigation”, “spate irrigation”, “stream flow diversion”, “groundwater recharge”, “runoff spreading systems”, “road runoff”, “periodic crop water deficits”, “in situ water conservation”, “eyebrow terraces”, “contour strips”, “furrows”, “contour bunds”, “trash lines”, “conservation tillage”,

“subsurface dams”, “surface dams” and “spring development”. A technical acronym mentioned in the same text is “IPM”, which is explained as “integrated pest management”.

The “hard words” (Gotti 2003) used in the reports are regularly made accessible to the reading public through such devices as definition, paraphrase and explication, which function as typical techniques for the popularization of specialized discourse (Calsamiglia / van Dijk 2004; Garzone 2006). As a matter of fact, accessibility is one of the crucial qualities pursued by *SOFIs*, which are aimed at a double public, consisting in the community of practice generating the texts and in the international community made up of world citizens showing an increasing degree of sensitivity to such questions as justice and sustainability. As a matter of fact, all human beings are envisaged as potential readers of *The State of Food Insecurity around the World*.

3.2. Discourse specialization in *WHR*

Like *SOFIs*, the *World Health Reports* are characterized by a formal technical style. Differently to *SOFIs*, however, they do not show great variability over the years in the degree of specialization of the language used. As a matter of fact, *WHRs* reveal a preference for domain-specific lexis when dealing with health conditions and medical problems, resource and staff management and political issues connected with the concepts of social capital, stewardship and governance. What changes over the twelve editions is the domain whose specialized vocabulary is borrowed – from medicine to economics, from social to political science – while morpho-syntactic aspects remain rather stable in that more or less the same linguistic structures and discursive strategies are accessed, those that belong to the resources of the language for general purposes but whose unusually frequent use is typical of specialized discourse by virtue of their depersonalizing potential: nominalization and the passive voice (Gotti 2003; 2008). Here follow examples for recourse to passivization:

- (26) Most of the world’s children are now immunized against the six major diseases of childhood [...] (*WHR* 1998)
- (27) Spectacular progress in reducing under-5 mortality achieved in the past few decades is projected to continue and could even accelerate. (*WHR* 1998)
- (28) WHO needs to be seen by governments and other agencies to have a sound understanding of sectoral needs and the political and institutional contexts in which they have to be addressed. (*WHR* 1999)
- (29) To date, our knowledge about health systems has been hampered by the weakness of routine information systems and insufficient attention to research. (*WHR* 2000)

- (30) International action is critical if these recommendations are to be implemented effectively [...]” (WHR 2001)
- (31) Only by doing so can we make sure that every mother, newborn baby and child in need of care can obtain it, and no one is driven into poverty by the cost of that care. (WHR 2005)
- (32) Seventy million mothers and their newborn babies, as well as countless children, are excluded from the health care to which they are entitled. (WHR 2005)
- (33) There is ample evidence that worker numbers and quality are positively associated with immunization coverage, outreach of primary care, and infant, child and maternal survival (WHR 2006)
- (34) Unregulated commercialization is accompanied by a blurring of the boundaries between public and private actors while the negotiation of entitlement and rights is increasingly politicized. (WHR 2008)
- (35) As indicated by the subtitle, the emphasis is firmly placed on moving towards universal coverage, a goal currently at the centre of debates about health service provision. (WHR 2010)

These are only a handful of examples randomly taken from some of the reports, but recourse to the passive voice in these documents is really pervasive and produces an effect of scientific “detachment” since research findings, results of therapeutic strategies, opinions and policies are separated from their shapers either for purposes of hedging or in an attempt to confer general validity on them. A close reading of these texts also strikes the analyst with the wealth of nominalizing forms. The reports teem with examples:

- (36) The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this publication, including tables and maps, do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever [...] (WHR 2000)
- (37) Timeliness is essential. (WHR 2002)
- (38) [...] antiretroviral treatment expansion is essential to protect the stability and security of communities, countries and regions and to strengthen the foundations of future development. (WHR 2004)
- (39) The responsibility for the interpretation and use of the material lies with the reader (WHR 2007)
- (40) There have been significant improvements in access to water, sanitation and antenatal care (WHR 2008).

Sometimes the two structures – nominalization and the passive voice – are combined so as to strengthen the effect of depersonalization:

- (41) Cost-effectiveness analyses should be used to identify high, medium and low priority interventions [...] (WHR 2002)

- (42) International and intersectoral collaboration should be strengthened to improve risk management and increase public awareness and understanding of risks to health (*WHR* 2002)
- (43) The Millennium Development Goals [...] set internationally agreed development aspirations for the world's population to be met by 2015 (*WHR* 2005)
- (44) Global solidarity is required (*WHR* 2010)

As already noticed for SOFIs, here too the choice of discursive strategies which are typical of specialized discourse is accompanied by the adoption of popularizing techniques, like definition, denomination, explication and exemplification (Calsamiglia / van Dijk 2004; Garzone 2006), alongside with the paraphrasing and glossing of terms and acronyms⁷.

A device which is often resorted to with a view to making these texts accessible to the general public is that of analogy, usually translated into a lavish use of similes, a trope which doubly features in *WHRs* as a popularizing technique and as a typical rhetorical resource of political discourse. As a matter of fact, similes in *WHRs* fall into two categories: images which strategically draw on the readers' experience to make otherwise difficult concepts easy to grasp, and the rhetorical device consisting in equating two distant planes of experience with the aim of striking the audience with startling similarities. Examples from the former category are the following:

- (45) Universal coverage means that, irrespective of the source of funds, the health care system functions like a national health insurance system. (*WHR* 1999)
- (46) Cholesterol is a fat-like substance, found in the bloodstream as well as in bodily organs and nerve fibres. (*WHR* 2002)
- (47) The use of combination chemotherapy with antiretroviral agents (ARVs) renders AIDS a chronic and treatable disease more like diabetes than other serious viral diseases for which there are no effective therapies. (*WHR* 2003)

Here are a few examples from the second category of similes:

- (48) Like equipment, old skills become obsolete with the advent of new technologies, and human capital needs to be maintained too. (*WHR* 2000)
- (49) I believe that talking about health without mental health is a little like tuning an instrument and leaving a few discordant notes. (*WHR* 2001)

⁷ *WHRs* are extremely rich in acronyms, which are regularly glossed: OIHP or Office international d'hygiène Publique, ICD or International statistical classification of diseases and related health problems, IHR or International health regulations, INNs or International Nonproprietary Names for pharmaceutical substances, DALYs or Disability-Adjusted Life Years, and many more.

- (50) The alternative is to try to shift the entire population distribution of risk factors to the left – like shifting the distribution of blood pressure for London civil servants in the direction of that of Kenyan nomads. (*WHR* 2002)
- (51) Epidemics of disease are like famines, wars and natural catastrophes in one major respect: they invariably bring further disasters in their wake. (*WHR* 2004)

In conclusion, it is possible to confirm the nature of the *World Health Reports* as what the very title declares them to be, that is to say “reports”, on the basis – among other linguistic markers – of their technical style, which impresses the reader of these texts as being rather formal and prone to adopting the lexical and morpho-syntactic qualities of domain-specific discourse. A closer reading of *WHRs*, however, uncovers the regular choice of popularizing techniques which guarantee a wider circulation of these institutional reports. The role of figurative meaning in institutional discourse, in particular the handling of simile both for emphasis and in its function as a popularizing technique, is a fascinating area of study, one which would require an in-depth study and the development of fine tools for the automatic searching of large corpora aiming to uncover the secret meanders of metaphorical meaning-making. This, however, lies beyond the scope of this research.

3.3. Discourse specialization in *WTR*

As might be expected, the style of the *World Trade Reports* is uniformly formal and technical. From a stylistic point of view, the texts in this subcorpus are closest to Werlich’s model for reports, that is to say for objective narratives. While the other two subcorpora abound in the use of popularizing techniques aiming to guarantee universal understanding and appreciation of texts whose purpose is both to raise awareness of problems affecting mankind and to persuade the readership to take action in the struggle for hunger and disease eradication, the *World Trade Reports* feature texts written by a pool of experts who allegedly address an unlimited number of readers – all those who take a stake in economic and commercial matters, potentially the whole of mankind, although *WTRs* are only published in English, French and Spanish – but in fact envisage a more limited audience represented by other experts – both within and without the WTO – who are conceptually and discursively equipped to tackle areas of economic science which are frankly accessible only to members of the community of practice authoring these texts.

A cursory glance at both frequency list and concordances extracted from this subcorpus immediately confirms the subjective impression of a high degree of specialization characterizing the language of *WTRs*, clearly featuring as a domain-specific variety of English, namely the English of economics: “anti-dumping measures”, “conformity assessment”, “contingency measures”, “current account”,

“deregulation”, “duty-free imports”, “elasticity values”, “externalities”, “freight costs”, “Price volatility”, “Gini coefficient”, “indications of geographical origin”, “licence fees”, “multilateral trading system”, “non-tariff measures”, “offshoring”, “outsourcing”, “Price volatility”, “revenues”, “royalties”, “subsidies”, “tariffs” and “trade flows”.

Another sign of lexical specialization is the ample use of technical acronyms and initialisms, which are all listed and glossed at the beginning of each report to avoid ambiguity and guarantee universal understanding as the possibility of non-expert stakeholders reading these texts still looms in the distance. Some are consolidated abbreviations like CIS (The Commonwealth of Independent States), COMECON (Council for Mutual Economic Cooperation), EFTA (European Free Trade Association), FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), FDI (Foreign Direct Investment), FTA (Free Trade Agreement), GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services) and GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade), GDP (Gross Domestic Product), GNP (Gross National Product), IMF (International Monetary Fund), MDGs (Millennium Development Goals), MTS (Multilateral Trading System), NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development), UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), WHO (World Health Organization) and WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization), while others are ad-hoc abbreviations, such as AVE (*Ad valorem* equivalent) – which includes a Latin phrase, as often happens in specialized discourse – CEP (Closer Economic Partnership), CEPT (Common Effective Preferential Tariffs), CGE (Computable General Equilibrium), CGs (Consultative Groups), DSB (Dispute Settlement Body), DTIS (Diagnostic Trade Integration Study), 3G (Third Generation), GSP (Generalized System of Preferences), HIPC (Highly-indebted Poor Countries), HS (Harmonised System of tariff classification), IDB (Integrated Database), IF (Integrated Framework), IICs (Inter-Institutional Committees), IUU (illegal, unreported and unregulated), MUV (Manufacturing Unit Values), R&D (Research and Development), RMP (Ratio of Margin of Preference Understanding), S&D (Special and Differential Treatment), SCM (Subsidies and Countervailing Measures), TPR (Trade Policy Review), and TRIPS (Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights).

Of the two classes of initialism, the former is common with international organizations, international agreements and well-known categories in economic science, while the latter usually denominates non-institutionalized working groups and committees, concepts and abstractions, research tools, measures for market management, etc. These ad-hoc abbreviations commonly make their first appearance in the texts in brackets, after the phrase they initialize has been given in full, to then regularly reappear with no gloss of any kind. Consolidated

acronyms, on the other hand, are never accompanied by explicative glosses. Both kinds of initialism are disseminated in large numbers throughout these texts, which makes their decoding process a rather laborious one for non-experts.

The high degree of specialization of the language used in *WTRs* surfaces in syntax as well as lexis. Like *SOFIs* and *WHRs*, *World Trade Reports* reveal a marked preference for such depersonalizing strategies as nominalization and passivization. Examples abound for both structures:

- (52) The weakness of the global economic recovery, greatly reduced capital (foreign direct investment) flows, major changes in exchange rates, increased restrictions on international trade transactions. (*WTR* 2003)
- (53) This openness would need *to be safeguarded* by appropriate regulation and international cooperation on supervision and surveillance. (*WTR* 2004)
- (54) Conformity assessment arrangements can have important implications for competitiveness and market access. (*WTR* 2005)
- (55) The strategic importance of coal decreased with the diversification of energy sources and the competitiveness of the domestic coal industry *was progressively eroded*. (*WTR* 2006)
- (56) The period *was characterized* by instability and unpredictability with respect to trade policy. (*WTR* 2007)
- (57) The fragmentation of production processes *implied* by off-shoring offers opportunities for industrial development and diversification. (*WTR* 2008)
- (58) Some even argue that the violation of a commitment or non-compliance with a dispute settlement finding may *be regarded* as a form of flexibility, although the robustness of agreements would determine the extent to which flexibility can *be defined* in these terms. (*WTR* 2009)
- (59) Recent studies have found that technological spillovers are greater with imports from high-knowledge countries [...] and that in developing countries total factor productivity is positively correlated to the R&D activity of their trading partners. (*WTR* 2010)
- (60) An important distinction is made between shallow integration, which focuses solely or mostly on border measures, and deep integration in which cooperation extends to “behind-the-border” measures. (*WTR* 2011)

No real effort is made in these texts to popularize technical information for lay readers. Rather, the handling of discourse in the *World Trade Reports* performs a gate-keeping function for the community of practice which both authors these texts and makes professional use of them. The global community of stakeholders which is formally acknowledged as the potential readership of *WTRs* only acts as imagined interlocutor in a situation of didactic communication, which, however, bears very little trace of real didacticism. The *World Trade Reports* are in actual fact a form of specialized discourse for insiders and can be classified as mostly

relating to the intraspecialistic level of the language of economics. The choice of a highly specialized contextual variety of the language is apparently in contrast with the alleged purpose of these reports, enunciated by the Director-General in the *Forewords* as a fundamentally didactic one, consisting in the spread of knowledge about the dynamics of international commerce. The reason for this divergence between alleged intentions and crucial linguistic choices may reside in the gap between declared purposes and underlying motives, which will be explored within the theoretical framework of genre analysis, in chapter VI.

An examination of institutional reports has evidenced a common tendency towards either a progressive specialization or “technologization”, as Fairclough terms it, of the language – in subcorpus I (FAO) – or a stable preference for a domain-specific variety of English – in subcorpus II (WHO) and III (WTO). This tendency is coupled by a constant effort to popularize expert knowledge in the reports published by FAO and WHO, whereas the reports authored by the Secretariat of the World Trade Organization show no real attempt at enabling the envisioned global readership to actually understand texts which, despite allegations, are only meant for a selected number of experts within the professional community generating the *World Trade Reports*.

Chapter V

A strategic handling of the interpersonal dimension

The complex network of mutual relationships developed by encoders and decoders in texts and through texts surfaces in a number of pragmatic and linguistic features, which are best studied through a micro-level analytical approach. Among these features, the deictic category of person has drawn the analyst's attention on account of its organizing potential on the structuring of the interpersonal dimension of institutional reports. Another essential role in the handling of the Hallidayan interpersonal metafunction is played by the fine linguistic category of modality, which enables encoders to subtly modify their positioning towards the truth content of their propositions and to adopt face-saving strategies (Brown / Levinson 1987) when facing decoders with proposals. In addition to the above considerations, both person and modality appear to be markers of text typology and may consequently confirm results obtained through an empirical study of textual profiles. For these reasons the two categories of person and modality will become the object of careful scrutiny in this chapter.

1. Person

A study of person may prove very useful for the definition of the participation framework and with a view to shedding light on the strategies of self-representation adopted by international organizations. Person¹ is primarily a contextual feature, one, however, that is inherently ingrained in text since it belongs to the deep-level structure of the meaning-making process of textualization. Texts in the three subcorpora have therefore been scanned in search of markers of this deictic category.

1.1. Person in *The State of Food Insecurity around the World*

A close reading of *The State of Food Insecurity around the World* reveals an alternation between the use of the personal 'they' – mostly referring to the population of either the developing or the developed countries – and the non-personal third person – both singular and plural – referring to a variety of conditions and problems, of abstract concepts and concrete objects. As regards recourse to the first person, its lavish use in the *Foreword* to each edition is a typical mark of authorial involvement, which contrasts with the absence of the second person, both from these microtexts and – as might be expected – from the

¹ On person, see Benveniste 1966.

body of each report. The absence of second-person forms is a sign of lack of reader engagement, which is rather unusual in an essentially directive text. It can be hypothesized that the reason for this is that the directive is in fact self-directed – with the use of inclusive ‘we’. Jacques Diouf, Director-General of FAO, is actually committing himself and the organization he represents to action for hunger eradication. However, by choosing the inclusive first person plural form, he spurs the readers to join in common action for a vital humanitarian cause. An example of the role of inclusive ‘we’ and of third-person pronouns may be quoted from the *Foreword* to the 2004 edition of *SOFI*:

- (1) We² MUST do better. According to FAO’s latest estimates the number of hungry people in the developing world has declined by only 9 million since the WFS baseline period, despite commitments made. More alarming still, the number has actually increased over the most recent five years for which numbers are available. In three of the four developing regions, more people were undernourished in 2000–2002 than had been the case in 1995–1997. Only Latin America and the Caribbean registered a modest reduction in the number of hungry people. We CAN do better. More than 30 countries, representing nearly half the population of the developing world, have provided both proof that rapid progress is possible and lessons in how that progress can be achieved. (*SOFI* 2004)

Against what seems to be a fairly high degree of stability in the handling of person a few signs of change over the various issues are traceable. It is interesting to note how the first-person singular pronoun ‘I’, clearly referring to the author of the *Foreword*, namely FAO Director-General Jacques Diouf, occurs twice, in the sixth and then in the last paragraph of the *Foreword* to the 2000 issue of *The State of Food Insecurity*, conferring a strong sense of personal commitment to the Director’s words:

- (2) I am disturbed to report that we find no significant change for the latest period, 1996-98, compared with the 1995-97 period reported last year. [...] I am convinced we will see the day when FAO ceases to publish a report titled The state of food insecurity in the world because the world will have lived up to its promise to end hunger. (*SOFI* 2000)

The first-person singular pronoun appears in no subsequent issue of *SOFI*, where a plural form is regularly opted for. The pervasive occurrence of inclusive ‘we’ in the *Forewords* obviously has the effect of creating a sense of common responsibility and collaboration between author and reading public, both ideally belonging to the world’s community of philanthropists and therefore sharing the same principles and objectives. Yet the number of occurrences of this pronoun varies from issue to issue, revealing a tendency to decline in some post Millennium editions of *SOFI*. A good example of this trend is the Foreword to *SOFI* 2001, where the dominant person is the third person, both personal and non-personal, either singular or plural. Here inclusive ‘we’ only steps in in the final

² My emphasis.

paragraph to emphasize the possibility and the need for common action against hunger. By contrast, *SOFI* 2002 and *SOFI* 2004 are extremely rich in occurrences of the ‘we’ form. Indeed, the two *Forewords* almost entirely consist in a personal appeal to the international community to work together against the common enemy: hunger and its crippling effects on mankind. The *Foreword* to *SOFI* 2004 even incorporates inclusive ‘we’ in the titles to three central paragraphs: “We MUST do better”, “We CAN do better” and “We cannot afford not to do better”. From the 2005 edition onwards the use of the first-person plural pronoun in the *Foreword* is on the decline, although it is only in the 2008 and 2009 editions that it appears to be almost always replaced by third-person pronouns, with the exception of the close to the *Foreword* prefacing the 2009 *State of Food Insecurity around the World*, where ‘we’ and ‘our’ are clearly of the exclusive type in that they refer to Jacques Diouf and Josette Sheeran – Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP) – and the organizations they represent:

- (3) This year’s State of Food Insecurity in the World is a true collaborative effort between our two organizations, combining our different strengths to create new insights and a publication that benefited tremendously from our joint cooperation. Collaboration with the United States Department of Agriculture on certain parts of the report has also been instrumental and is highly valued; we thank them for their efforts and willingness to share their expertise. (*SOFI* 2009)

The *Foreword* to the 2010 edition, also jointly signed by Jacques Diouf and Josette Sheeran, revolves round the use of third-person subjects, with the exception of the last two paragraphs, which introduce both inclusive and exclusive ‘we’ in succession – the former in the eighth and the latter in the ninth paragraph. Finally, the 2011 issue of *SOFI* – signed by Jacques Diouf, Josette Sheeran and Kanayo F. Nwanze, President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) – shows a high prevalence of third-person subjects, with intermittent recourse to exclusive ‘we’. Only in the fifth and sixth paragraphs does inclusive ‘we’ step in a couple of times in the guise of subject of future action aiming to reduce hunger. The choice of both personal and non-personal third-person subjects, which dominates the *Foreword* to the latest editions of *SOFI*, is in accordance with another feature of discourse in later issues of the *State of Food Insecurity*, namely specialization, which was discussed in chapter IV, § 3. Indeed, discourse tends to be more and more precise and impersonal as it moves from a passionate appeal for concerted action against undernourishment to an accurate study of the problem, which rests on up-to-date statistical data and their correct interpretation.

The generally abundant use of first-person plural forms in the *Forewords* is matched by the reappearance of the ‘we’ form in the close to each report. Examples may be quoted from various editions:

- (4) We have the tools to achieve the World Food Summit target of halving the number of undernourished globally by 2015. (*SOFI* 1999)
- (5) The World Food Summit: five years later is almost upon us. World leaders will again assemble in Italy, as they did in 1996 and 1974. What do we have to tell them? [...] as was seen in the first two articles of this report and confirmed in the data tables (p. 51-57), progress has been very uneven from country to country. (*SOFI* 2001)
- (6) We have ample evidence that rapid progress can be made by applying a twin-track strategy that attacks both the causes and the consequences of extreme poverty and hunger [...] To meet the WFS goal, we must now translate the twin-track approach into large-scale programmes that can be adopted in countries where hunger is widespread and resources are extremely limited. (*SOFI* 2004)
- (7) This report has shown that, although we are closer to the MDG target of halving the proportion of undernourished people by 2015, we are still very far from the WFS target of halving their number. We must step up dramatically our efforts to reach the WFS hunger reduction target. (*SOFI* 2006)
- (8) The task in front of us is daunting: each year until 2015, the world must be able to count 31 million fewer hungry people [...] if we are to meet the pledge made during the WFS. (*SOFI* 2006)
- (9) If the political will is there, we can reach it. (*SOFI* 2006)

From the 2008 edition onwards the first-person plural form seems to disappear from the close of the report. This subjective impression is confirmed by the automatic search of individual texts and by a study of the plot showing the distribution of ‘we’. As a matter of fact, the frequency percentages of the first-person plural pronoun in the subcorpus show a tangible decrease in the use of ‘we’ in later editions, with the exception of the 2006 issue:

	we (frequency percentage)
<i>SOFI</i> 1999	0.12 %
<i>SOFI</i> 2000	0.15 %
<i>SOFI</i> 2001	0.03 %
<i>SOFI</i> 2002	0.19 %
<i>SOFI</i> 2003	0.08 %
<i>SOFI</i> 2004	0.13 %

<i>SOFI</i> 2005	0.11 %
<i>SOFI</i> 2006	0.23 %
<i>SOFI</i> 2008	0 %
<i>SOFI</i> 2009	0 %
<i>SOFI</i> 2010	0.02 %
<i>SOFI</i> 2011	0.04 %

Table 1. 'We' in every single edition of *SOFI*

The subcorpus as a whole has been scanned for frequency percentages of first- and second-person pronouns and possessives. Third-person forms have been excluded from automatic querying due to the extreme variability of these forms, mostly represented by lexical items which obviously escape all quantitative analysis. The study of word frequencies has been coupled with the extraction of concordances for the pronouns 'we' / 'us' and the possessives 'our' / 'ours' so as to discern their inclusive, exclusive and ambiguous uses. The latter are occurrences of the form in which it is difficult to decide whether the reference includes or excludes the addressees as it is probably meant to either refer to the community of practice authoring the reports or to the international community at large, according to reader inclination. The reason for this ambiguity may be the attempt to ascribe the inability to achieve goals to a non-definite group of stakeholders, which may or may not focus on the addressees, depending on the reader's willingness to share responsibility for failure with the organization issuing the reports. As a matter of fact, such uses abound when setbacks on the way to a hunger-free world are detailed. An example may be quoted from the 2000 edition:

- (10) Under that "business as usual" scenario we would reduce global hunger by slightly less than one-third, not one-half. (*SOFI* 2000)

These are the results of the search for frequency percentages of grammatical person markers³:

I/me/my/mine	Inclusive we/us/our/ours	Exclusive we/us/our/ours	Ambiguous we/us/our/ours
0.02 %	0.01 %	0.03 %	0.03 %

Table 2. Grammatical person markers in *SOFIs*

³³ Second person forms are totally absent and have therefore been omitted from the table.

The form ‘we’ has also been studied in its distribution throughout the documents on the basis of the plot worked out by Wordsmith Tools with a view to validating the hypothesis that its use be prevalent in the commissive *Foreword* and in the directive close to the reports. It was impossible, however, to distinguish between inclusive, exclusive and ambiguous uses of the pronoun in the plot:

N	File	Words	Hts	per 1,000	Dispersion	Plot
1	fao.1999.txt	13.386	17	1,27	0,395	
2	fao.2000.txt	15.251	23	1,51	0,406	
3	fao.2001.txt	31.449	10	0,32	0,282	
4	fao.2002.txt	17.290	34	1,97	0,575	
5	fao.2003.txt	15.255	13	0,85	0,234	
6	fao.2004.txt	17.357	24	1,38	0,433	
7	fao.2005.txt	16.182	19	1,17	0,294	
8	fao.2006.txt	14.499	36	2,48	0,567	
9	fao.2008.txt	22.756	1	0,04	-0,069	
10	fao.2009.txt	27.486	2	0,07	0,300	
11	fao.2010.txt	26.059	5	0,19	0,282	
12	fao.2011.txt	28.801	11	0,38	0,210	

Table 3. Plot of ‘we’ in *SOFIs*

As the plot shows, the pronoun ‘we’ abounds in the opening unit of *SOFIs*, is almost absent from the body of the reports and often reappears in the close, suggesting its association with those textual units which appear to perform an essentially interpersonal function in that they try to establish relationships of commitment and engagement between authorship and readership.

1.2. Person in *The World Health Report*

The World Health Report (from now on referred to as *WHR*) is characterized by a high prevalence of third-person subjects – either singular or plural, personal or non-personal – which are mostly realized by noun phrases denoting countries, and their populations, medical conditions, problems, activities, abstractions, etc. These third-person subjects coexist with a number of occurrences of first-person forms, both singular and plural. Here are the frequency percentages of first-person pronouns and possessives⁴ extracted from the subcorpus consisting in the twelve editions of *The World Health Report*⁵:

⁴ Second-person forms have been omitted on account of their negligible number of occurrences in the subcorpus.

⁵ Here, too, second person forms are almost totally absent and have therefore been omitted from the table.

I/me/my/mine	Inclusive we/us/our/ours	Exclusive we/us/our/ours
0.02 %	0.01 %	0.02 %

Table 4. Grammatical person markers in *WHRs*

First person singular and first person plural forms are characterized by similar frequency percentages (0.02 % for ‘I’ and 0.03 % for ‘we’). The ambiguous uses of ‘we’ are extremely rare, while inclusive and exclusive uses amount to 0.01 % and 0.02 % respectively. Data thus show a slight predominance of exclusive over inclusive uses of ‘we’.

A diachronic study of the handling of ‘we’ in individual editions has been carried out through the extraction of frequency lists:

	we (frequency percentage)
<i>WHR</i> 1998	0 %
<i>WHR</i> 1999	0.21 %
<i>WHR</i> 2000	0.01 %
<i>WHR</i> 2001	0.04 %
<i>WHR</i> 2002	0.03 %
<i>WHR</i> 2003	0 %
<i>WHR</i> 2004	0.02 %
<i>WHR</i> 2005	0.02 %
<i>WHR</i> 2006	0.01 %
<i>WHR</i> 2007	0 %
<i>WHR</i> 2008	0.01 %
<i>WHR</i> 2010	0.07 %

Table 5. ‘We’ in every single edition of *WHR*

If seen against frequency percentages extracted from subcorpus I (FAO), automatic queries evidence a more limited use of the first-person plural pronoun

in subcorpus II (WHO). Seen from a diachronic perspective, data reveal a considerable degree of variability in the use of this form, which generally does not abound in the subcorpus, but peaks in the 1999 edition to a 0.21 percentage of use. The distribution of the first-person plural pronoun is evidenced by the plot, which shows a prevalence of initial and final position in most editions of *WHR*.

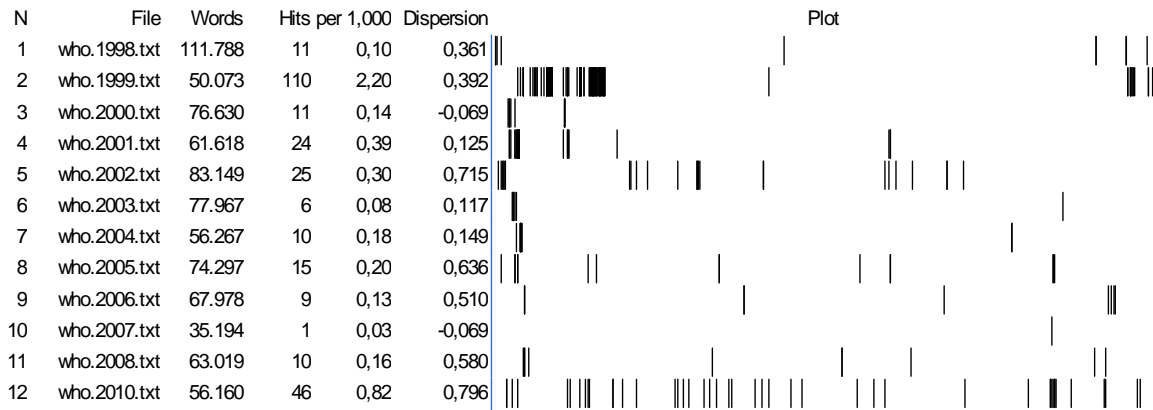


Table 6. Plot of ‘we’ in *WHRs*

The dominant position of the first plural person is in the introductory *Message*, but the form also occurs in the course of the report, notably in the final instructions at the close, which addresses the international community in a last emotional appeal for strenuous engagement in the battle for a healthier world. A closer study of the cotext of each occurrence shows a considerable – though not pervasive – use of inclusive ‘we’ – referring both to drafters and addressees – in the introductory *Message*, while in the report itself the pronoun usually refers to WHO and its staff. This abundance of inclusive first-person plural forms in the Director-General’s *Message* finds an explanation in its letter-like structure, which also accounts for the lavish use of the first person singular, signalling authorial involvement. What can be inferred from this preference for first-person forms, both singular and plural, is WHO’s attempt to establish a common arena of health specialists and world citizens, all working together to make the Earth a healthier place to live in, sharing objectives and pooling knowledge, professional skills and financial resources. This fundamental effort to draw in states, local communities, national and international organizations and individuals aims to turn the world into a global community of stakeholders collaborating in the cause for universal health. Both regional and local health units from all over the world are indeed subsumed under the exclusive ‘we’ denoting WHO, while planetary stakeholders are conjured by the inclusive ‘we’ identifying drafters and addressees alike, brought together for present and future efforts by the Millennium Development Goals.

1.3. Person in *The World Trade Report*

Like *WHR*, the *World Trade Report* (from now on referred to as *WTR*) sees a high prevalence of third-person subjects – either singular or plural, personal or non-personal – which usually consist in noun phrases. The choice of a formal impersonal style which characterizes the *World Trade Reports* determines a very limited use of inclusive ‘we’, both in the *Foreword* to each edition and in the body of the reports. However, first-person singular forms greatly abound in the *Forewords*, as can be noticed in *CEO’s Letters* introducing company reports (Garzone 2004; 2008). The subjective impression striking the analyst on reading *WTRs* is that the Secretary General is trying to involve the readership through the adoption of a rather personal tone in a letter-like text which prefaces what is meant to feature as an impersonal presentation of “facts” and their interpretation. While this presentation needs to be clothed in the garments of objectivity and consequently selects depersonalizing strategies and third-person subjects, the personal appeal of the Secretary-General in the *Foreword* is prone to opt for the informal writer-engaging ‘I’ which confers the tone of personal narrative to what is otherwise a sketchy anticipation of the content of the report. Frequency percentages of first- and second-person singular and plural forms in subcorpus III (WTO) confirm the subjective impression generated by a close reading of texts and evidence a clear predominance of ‘I’ and exclusive ‘we’ over a negligible percentage of inclusive and ambiguous uses of the first-person plural pronoun and over rare occurrences of the second-person form, which for this reason are not included in the table:

I/me/my/mine	Exclusive we/us/our/ours
0.09 %	0.02 %

Table 7. Grammatical person markers in *WTRs*

The plot of the first-person plural pronoun ‘we’ evidences its irregular distribution over the body of the reports, while its frequent presence in initial position in the *Forewords* shows the Director-General’s tendency to identify with the organization he represents:

N	File	Words	Hits per 1,000	Dispersion	Plot
1	wto.2003.txt	108.521	20	0,18	0,612
2	wto.2004.txt	115.906	22	0,19	0,650
3	wto.2005.txt	172.981	24	0,14	0,543
4	wto.2006.txt	139.766	50	0,36	0,746
5	wto.2007.txt	214.690	106	0,49	0,596
6	wto.2008.txt	111.269	21	0,19	0,321
7	wto.2009.txt	110.229	24	0,22	0,478
8	wto.2010.txt	133.711	32	0,24	0,625
9	wto.2011.txt	109.256	56	0,51	0,853

Table 8. Plot of ‘we’ in *WTRs*

A high degree of stability in the frequency percentage of the first-person plural pronoun is revealed by a diachronic exploration of the nine editions:

	we (frequency percentage)
<i>WTR</i> 2003	0.02 %
<i>WTR</i> 2004	0.02 %
<i>WTR</i> 2005	0.01 %
<i>WTR</i> 2006	0.03 %
<i>WTR</i> 2007	0.05 %
<i>WTR</i> 2008	0.02 %
<i>WTR</i> 2009	0.02 %
<i>WTR</i> 2010	0.02 %
<i>WTR</i> 2011	0.05 %

Table 9. ‘We’ in every single edition of *WTR*

The first-person plural pronoun almost invariably refers to the WTO, its staff and other organizations or working groups contributing data for analysis. It identifies the community of practice which is invested with the task of drafting *WTRs*, that is to say the Secretary-General and the staff employed in the publishing division of the WTO, which finds a mouthpiece and an opportunity for self-legitimization in the yearly publication of these texts.

What seems to emerge from a qualitative as well as quantitative exploration of all three subcorpora is that the authorship of institutional reports strongly identifies with the international organizations originating the texts. Attempts at drawing in the readership through the adoption of such textual elements as the inclusive first-person plural contribute to establishing a sense of belonging and the impression of shared objectives with a view to winning over the interlocutor – whether real or imagined – to an interpretation of social and economic reality which may be as close as possible to the one provided – though not explicitly argued for – by the organizations.

2. Modality

That “area between yes and no” (Halliday / Matthiessen 2004) which is occupied by modalization, offers scope for promising analysis aiming to detect fine differences of stance in the way both propositions and proposals are posed. The movement from epistemic modality or an absence of modalization in information-giving units to deontic modality in action-demanding units, reveals interesting features of the interpersonal dimension in institutional reports in that it tends to signal a shift from the illustration of results in the achievement of objectives to the presentation of challenges. In other words, the readiness to shift from epistemic to deontic modalization whenever setbacks loom on the horizon, takes on the features of an escape from the sad necessity of reporting on failure, which is aptly dressed up as future success. A study of verbal modal operators in the three subcorpora is therefore introduced in the following sub-sections⁶. Further markers of modality – a number of adjectives and adverbs – have been automatically searched – epistemic “possible”, “probably”, “likely”, and deontic “necessary”, “desirable”, “hopefully” – but their occurrence in the corpus is negligible and has therefore been ignored in the analysis.

2.1. Modality and verbal modal operators in *SOFI*

As regards the handling of modality in *SOFIs*, a careful balance is struck between unmodalized statements and epistemic modality on the one hand and deontic modality on the other. Zero modality characterizes the paragraphs which introduce data about the past or present state of food insecurity, whereas epistemic modality is used as a hedging strategy in the paragraphs which project available data over the years to come. Differently, deontic modality dominates the paragraphs which instructively require the readers to actively take arms in the battle against undernourishment around the world.

Seen from a diachronic perspective, the profile of alternating modalities in *The State of Food Insecurity in the World* does not change substantially over the

⁶ For a comprehensive study of modality, see Coates 1983; Halliday 2004; Palmer 1979; 2001.

years. As a matter of fact, it shows a frequent shift from the use of one kind of modality to another, which is revealing of text type switching. In particular, the distribution of modal operators reflects the structuring of discourse into propositions, focusing on the description and narration of phenomena, and proposals, which instructively require action on the part of decoders or commit encoders to future behaviour. The modal operators chosen for analysis are epistemic verbal operators ‘may’, ‘might’ and ‘should’ and deontic ‘must’, ‘need’ and ‘should’ on account of the prominence they enjoy in the texts. An automatic search of the subcorpus for word frequencies and the extraction of concordances aiming to discriminate between epistemic and deontic uses of ‘should’ have yielded the following results in terms of frequency percentages and plots detailing the distribution of each operator:

Epistemic modal operators		
may	might	should
0.13 %	0.02 %	0 %

Table 10. Epistemic modal operators in *SOFIs*

Deontic modal operators		
must	need	should
0.07 %	0.03 %	0.06 %

Table 11. Deontic modal operators in *SOFIs*

N	File	Words	Hits	per 1,000	Dispersion	Plot
1	fao.1999.txt	13.386	14	1,05	0,528	
2	fao.2000.txt	15.251	15	0,98	0,501	
3	fao.2001.txt	31.449	61	1,94	0,809	
4	fao.2002.txt	17.290	11	0,64	0,586	
5	fao.2003.txt	15.255	24	1,57	0,558	
6	fao.2004.txt	17.357	13	0,75	0,379	
7	fao.2005.txt	16.182	10	0,62	0,687	
8	fao.2006.txt	14.499	5	0,34	0,687	
9	fao.2008.txt	22.756	57	2,50	0,722	
10	fao.2009.txt	27.486	28	1,02	0,507	
11	fao.2010.txt	26.059	42	1,61	0,642	
12	fao.2011.txt	28.801	54	1,87	0,824	

Table 12. Plot of ‘may’ in *SOFIs*

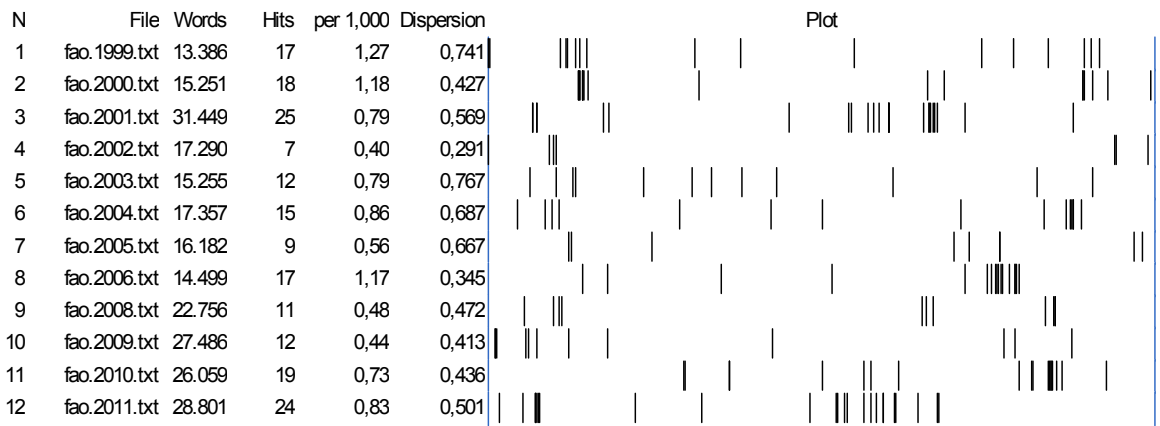
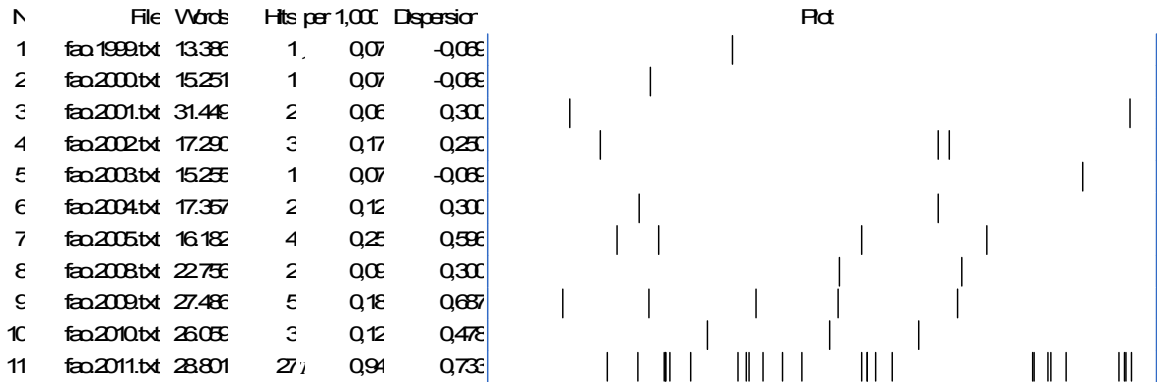


Table 14. Plot of ‘must’ in *SOFIs*

The plots show the dissemination of epistemic and deontic operators throughout each text, as well as a steady increase in strong epistemic modalization through ‘might’ over the years, whereas softer epistemic modalization through ‘may’ remains rather stable. As regards deontic ‘must’, its distribution sees a prevalence of initial and final position, which confirms the hypothesis that instructive units abound in the introductory *Forewords* and in the close to each report. The plot of the modal ‘need’ is not indicative of the distribution of deontic modality on account of the functional polisemy of this form, which may function as a noun as well as verbal operator and has therefore been ignored. The plot of ‘should’ has also been ignored because of its semantic polisemy, which allows for deontic as well as epistemic uses of this modal operator. For the purposes of a diachronic scanning of *SOFIs* in search of regularities and changes in the handling of modality, the single editions have been sieved through for word frequencies. The

results of this study along the temporal axis are summarized in the following tables:

	may (frequency percentage)	might (frequency percentage)	epistemic should (frequency percentage)
<i>SOFI</i> 1999	0.10 %	0 %	0 %
<i>SOFI</i> 2000	0.09 %	0 %	0 %
<i>SOFI</i> 2001	0.19 %	0 %	0.01 %
<i>SOFI</i> 2002	0.06 %	0.02 %	0 %
<i>SOFI</i> 2003	0.15 %	0 %	0.02 %
<i>SOFI</i> 2004	0.07 %	0.01 %	0 %
<i>SOFI</i> 2005	0.06 %	0.02 %	0 %
<i>SOFI</i> 2006	0.03 %	0 %	0 %
<i>SOFI</i> 2008	0.24 %	0 %	0.02 %
<i>SOFI</i> 2009	0.10 %	0.02 %	0.01 %
<i>SOFI</i> 2010	0.15 %	0.01 %	0 %
<i>SOFI</i> 2011	0.18 %	0.09 %	0.01 %

Table 15. Epistemic modal operators in every single edition of *SOFI*

	must (frequency percentage)	need (frequency percentage)	deontic should (frequency percentage)
<i>SOFI</i> 1999	0.12 %	0.02 %	0.02 %
<i>SOFI</i> 2000	0.11 %	0.03 %	0.06 %
<i>SOFI</i> 2001	0.08 %	0.04 %	0.06 %
<i>SOFI</i> 2002	0.04 %	0.01 %	0 %

<i>SOFI</i> 2003	0.07 %	0.01 %	0 %
<i>SOFI</i> 2004	0.08 %	0.02 %	0 %
<i>SOFI</i> 2005	0.05 %	0.05 %	0.02 %
<i>SOFI</i> 2006	0.11 %	0.04 %	0.08 %
<i>SOFI</i> 2008	0.05 %	0.03 %	0.08 %
<i>SOFI</i> 2009	0.04 %	0.03 %	0.07 %
<i>SOFI</i> 2010	0.07 %	0.04 %	0.14 %
<i>SOFI</i> 2011	0.08 %	0.04 %	0.11 %

Table 16. Deontic modal operators in every single edition of *SOFI*

The frequency percentages of the modal operators examined in each issue of *The State of Food Insecurity* confirm the subjective impression striking first as well as second coder of a prominent role played by both epistemic and deontic modality throughout the whole series of *SOFIs*, with a tendency towards softer epistemic modalization and, conversely, stronger deontic modalization in all editions⁷. An interesting feature in the handling of modality, seen from a diachronic perspective, is the association of the lowest frequency percentages for epistemic operators with the highest frequency percentages for deontic operators in *SOFI* 2006, which suggests a shift in focus from the recognition of the provisional nature of statistical research to a forceful assertion of the need for the international community to take action in the struggle against hunger.

2.2. Modality and verbal modal operators in *WHR*

A striking difference in the handling of modality in subcorpus I (FAO) and II (WHO) is the degree and manner of deontic modalization. As a matter of fact, linguistic markers for deontic modality in *WHRs* tend to be rather unobtrusive and more indirect than they are in *SOFIs*, signalling the need for commitment and “stewardship” on the part of governments, instead of straightforwardly demanding action. The frequency percentage of a soft marker for deontic modality like ‘need’ is 0.05 % in subcorpus II (WHO) against a 0.03 percentage in subcorpus I (FAO), while the frequency percentage of the binding ‘must’ is higher in subcorpus I (0.07 %) against a 0.06 percentage in subcorpus II. Here are frequency percentages of deontic modal operators, followed by frequency percentages of

⁷ The adjectives “soft” and “strong” are used here to describe the quality of the modal operators used. ‘May’ and ‘must’ are thus classified as “strong” operators, while ‘might’ and ‘need’ are classified as “soft” operators.

epistemic ‘may’, ‘might’ and ‘should’, which are almost identical with the corresponding percentages extracted from *SOFIs*:

Deontic modal operators		
must	need	should
0.06 %	0.05 %	0.10 %

Table 17. Deontic modal operators in *WHRs*

Epistemic modal operators		
may	might	should
0.12 %	0.02 %	0.01 %

Table 18. Epistemic modal operators in *WHRs*

An even more striking mark of soft modalization in *WHRs* is the fact that deontic modality often permeates apparently unmodalized sections or subsections which narrate progress and setbacks on the way to a healthier world, creating an effect of superimposition of text types – notably narration, description and instruction. The deontic colouring of these passages is effected through the prefacing of unmodalized textual units – either descriptive, narrative or expository – by introductory paragraphs or sections functioning as instructive preface. An example is the introduction to Chapter VI of the *WHR* for the year 2000, which carries the title “How is the Public Interest Protected?” and provides the following “preface” on the title page:

- (11) Governments should be the “stewards” of their national resources, maintaining and improving them for the benefit of their populations. In health, this means being ultimately responsible for the careful management of their citizens’ wellbeing. Stewardship in health is the very essence of good government. For every country it means establishing the best and fairest health system possible. The health of the people must always be a national priority: government responsibility for it is continuous and permanent. Ministries of health must take on a large part of the stewardship of health systems. Health policy and strategies need to cover the private provision of services and private financing, as well as state funding and activities. Only in this way can health systems as a whole be oriented towards achieving goals that are in the public interest. Stewardship encompasses the tasks of defining the vision and direction of health policy, exerting influence through regulation and advocacy, and collecting and using information. At the international level, stewardship means influencing global research and production to meet health goals. It also means

providing an evidence base to guide countries' efforts to improve the performance of their health systems. (*WHR* 2000)

The opening section – “Governments as stewards of health resources” – still insists on strong deontic modalization in the instructions given to governments in their role of stewards of resources and providers of health care, but what follows is an unmodalized section – “What is wrong with stewardship today?” – which analyzes the problems governments have to face when trying to implement a goal-oriented effective management of resources. This fundamentally narrative / descriptive unit –with no trace of modal verbal operators or other modal forms – is imbued with a deontic taste due to the preceding section as well as the following one – “Health policy – vision for the future” – which envisages strategies for governments' future handling of health management and consequently consists in a number of suggestions expressed by the modal operator “should”:

- (12) A policy framework should recognize all three health system goals and identify strategies to improve the attainment of each. Few countries have explicit policies on the overall goodness and fairness of the health system. Yet the need to combine these two values in governance can be traced far back in history. [...] Policy should (and in partial ways sometimes does) address the way in which the system's key functions are to be improved. With respect to the provision of services, all providers should be recognized and their future contribution – greater in some cases, less in others – should be outlined. On financing, strategies to reduce dependence on out-of-pocket payments and to increase prepayment should be identified. Roles of the principal financing organizations – private and public, domestic and external – and of households should be recognized and their future directions determined. The machinery of stewardship, designed to regulate and monitor how these functions change in accordance with policy, should also be made explicit (*WHR* 2000)

The spilling effect of deontic modality from strongly modalized textual units over neighbouring “neutral” ones can also be observed in Chapter III of *WHR* 2004 – “Community participation: advocacy and action” – which opens with a brief preface on the title page teeming with deontic “wills” and closes on an instructive note in a section – also rich in occurrences of the same modal operator – which details action aiming to best involve local communities in the implementation of public health strategies: “Community empowerment and public health: shaping the future”. The sections framed by these instructive extremes narrate the history of public health management in developing countries.

This technique of “sandwiching” epistemically modalized propositions between two layers of deontically modalized proposals is scattered throughout many *WHRs* and is sometimes substituted by the modular repetition of a similar pattern, in which one of the two outer layers – usually the first – is omitted.

An example of this pattern is provided by *WHR* 2006, whose opening “Overview” epitomizes the whole report in its alternation of descriptive / narrative

and instructive units. The “Overview” consists in three chapters – “Why the workforce is important”, “Strategies: working lifespan of entry–workforce–exit” and “Moving forward together” – of which the first is largely unmodalized and only occasionally shows some degree of epistemic modalization as it describes the present condition of health workers worldwide and narrates trends in its distribution, while the second and third chapters envision strategies for improved handling of the workforce on a global scale and consequently abound in soft deontic expressions such as “it is central / essential”, “require/s”, etc. The rest of the report is similarly structured as a modular reproduction of this proposition-proposal pattern, with each chapter introducing a descriptive and / or narrative section marked by epistemic or zero modality, followed by instructive units listed under the heading “Strategies”, which teem with deontic operators. Thus, Chapter I starts with an unmodalized expository introduction and first section which define health workers and their role, then goes on to describe their numbers and distribution, sex, age, salary and other data, to finally provide instructions as to what should be done to finance the scaling up of the workforce. Similarly, Chapter IV opens with three unmodalized expository sections defining a well-performing workforce and the factors which determine its performance, to then switch to envisaging strategies of progress. Chapter V first narrates the ebbs and flows of health worker migrations and the reasons for these migrations, then moves on to suggest possible solutions to the problem of the shortage of health workers around the globe. The following chapters, up to Chapter VII, which is the last in the report, entirely consist in the instructive laying down of strategies as to how the problems connected with the health workforce should best be tackled. The monolithic quality of these chapters contrasts the textual organization of most *WHRs*, which tend to show great variability in their textual profile and consequently in the alternation of epistemic, deontic and zero modality, but *WHR 2006* is rather an exception to the rule than a special rule in its own right.

From a diachronic perspective, the extraction of frequency percentages and concordances yields interesting results:

	may (frequency percentage)	might (frequency percentage)	epistemic should (frequency percentage)
<i>WHR 1998</i>	0.08 %	0 %	0.02 %
<i>WHR 1999</i>	0.01 %	0 %	0 %
<i>WHR 2000</i>	0.19 %	0.03 %	0.01 %
<i>WHR 2001</i>	0.17 %	0 %	0 %

<i>WHR</i> 2002	0.14 %	0.04 %	0.01 %
<i>WHR</i> 2003	0.08 %	0.01 %	0.01 %
<i>WHR</i> 2004	0.10 %	0.01 %	0.02 %
<i>WHR</i> 2005	0.14 %	0 %	0.01 %
<i>WHR</i> 2006	0.13 %	0.02 %	0.01 %
<i>WHR</i> 2007	0.14 %	0.03 %	0.03 %
<i>WHR</i> 2008	0.11 %	0 %	0 %
<i>WHR</i> 2010	0.10 %	0.06 %	0 %

Table 19. Epistemic modal operators in every single edition of *WHR*

	must (frequency percentage)	need (frequency percentage)	deontic should (frequency percentage)
<i>WHR</i> 1998	0.04%	0.03 %	0.10 %
<i>WHR</i> 1999	0.07 %	0.08 %	0.09 %
<i>WHR</i> 2000	0.06 %	0.06 %	0.16 %
<i>WHR</i> 2001	0.08 %	0.08 %	0.24 %
<i>WHR</i> 2002	0.03 %	0.4 %	0.13 %
<i>WHR</i> 2003	0.06 %	0.03 %	0.05 %
<i>WHR</i> 2004	0.08 %	0.05 %	0.07 %
<i>WHR</i> 2005	0.02 %	0.03 %	0.07 %
<i>WHR</i> 2006	0.10 %	0.05 %	0.13 %
<i>WHR</i> 2007	0.06 %	0.04 %	0.04 %
<i>WHR</i> 2008	0.04 %	0.04 %	0.06 %
<i>WHR</i> 2010	0.07 %	0.08 %	0.07 %

Table 20. Deontic modal operators in every single edition of *WHR*

The epistemic operators examined evidence considerable variation over the twelve editions of *The World Health Report*, both in the frequency of their use and in the differential between softer and stronger modalization –‘may’ and ‘might’ respectively, with ‘might’ always playing a minor role, though frequency percentages vary from edition to edition. Differently, the deontic operators ‘must’ and ‘need’ converge on similar percentages of use with little oscillations over the years. Still from a diachronic perspective, a study of the distribution of modal operators in the reports through an examination of plots sheds light on variation in the textual pattern emerging from them: a patchwork of text types, with propositions and proposals often following each other in close succession. An interesting finding is the absence of the strong deontic operator ‘must’ in both initial and final position in *WHRs* issued in 1999, 2002, 2003, 2006 and 2008, suggesting the option for a face-saving indirect request for action in the instructive units of these editons.

2.3. Modality and verbal modal operators in *WTR*

Compared to *SOFIs* and *WHRs*, the *World Trade Reports* are strikingly poor in deontic modal operators and decidedly rich in verbal markers of epistemic modality. Here follow frequency percentages of the main verbal operators of either category:

Epistemic modal operators		
may	might	should
0.30 %	0.04 %	0.01 %

Table 21. Epistemic modal operators in *WTRs*

Deontic modal operators		
must	need	should
0.04 %	0.03 %	0.06 %

Table 22. Deontic modal operators in *WTRs*

The reason for the scarcity of deontic operators seems to suggest a retreat of the WTO and its Secretariat from the task of persuading stakeholders to take common action in order to modify the present economic and commercial arena. On the contrary, the lavish recourse to epistemic modal operators signals the authors’ choice to reduce their commitment to the validity of research results, which are

presented as provisional and open to interpretation. This retreat from personal commitment to the absolute validity of research findings is typical of scientific discourse. Here follow the plots showing the distribution of ‘may’, ‘might’ and ‘must’:

N	File	Words	Hits per 1,000	Dispersion	Plot	
1	wto.2003.txt	108.521	284	2,62	0,833	
2	wto.2004.txt	115.906	367	3,17	0,885	
3	wto.2005.txt	172.981	576	3,33	0,846	
4	wto.2006.txt	139.766	392	2,80	0,816	
5	wto.2007.txt	214.690	614	2,86	0,839	
6	wto.2008.txt	111.269	310	2,79	0,830	
7	wto.2009.txt	110.229	579	5,25	0,845	
8	wto.2010.txt	133.711	475	3,55	0,891	
9	wto.2011.txt	109.256	324	2,97	0,882	

Table 23. Plot of ‘may’ in *WTRs*

N	File	Words	Hits per 1,000	Dispersion	Plot	
1	wto.2003.txt	108.521	63	0,58	0,727	
2	wto.2004.txt	115.906	34	0,29	0,615	
3	wto.2005.txt	172.981	54	0,31	0,637	
4	wto.2006.txt	139.766	53	0,38	0,738	
5	wto.2007.txt	214.690	60	0,28	0,719	
6	wto.2008.txt	111.269	21	0,19	0,829	
7	wto.2009.txt	110.229	65	0,59	0,736	
8	wto.2010.txt	133.711	53	0,40	0,776	
9	wto.2011.txt	109.256	60	0,55	0,733	

Table 24. Plot of ‘might’ in *WTRs*

N	File	Words	Hits per 1,000	Dispersion	Plot	
1	wto.2011.txt	109.256	24	0,22	0,644	
2	wto.2003.txt	108.521	23	0,21	0,675	
3	wto.2005.txt	172.981	103	0,60	0,705	
4	wto.2008.txt	111.269	19	0,17	0,706	
5	wto.2009.txt	110.229	89	0,81	0,715	
6	wto.2006.txt	139.766	45	0,32	0,749	
7	wto.2004.txt	115.906	31	0,27	0,759	
8	wto.2010.txt	133.711	53	0,40	0,760	
9	wto.2007.txt	214.690	85	0,40	0,815	

Table 25. Plot of ‘must’ in *WTRs*

The plots show a high degree of dissemination of all four modal operators and the pervasiveness of the epistemic ‘may’.

A diachronic study of epistemic and deontic modal operators shows no great variation across the eight editions:

	may (frequency percentage)	might (frequency percentage)	epistemic should (frequency percentage)
<i>WTR</i> 2003	0.25 %	0.06 %	0.01 %
<i>WTR</i> 2004	0.30 %	0.03 %	0.01 %
<i>WTR</i> 2005	0.32 %	0.03 %	0.01 %
<i>WTR</i> 2006	0.15 %	0.02 %	0 %
<i>WTR</i> 2007	0.27 %	0.03 %	0.01 %
<i>WTR</i> 2008	0.27 %	0.02 %	0.01 %
<i>WTR</i> 2009	0.50 %	0.06 %	0.01 %
<i>WTR</i> 2010	0.34 %	0.04 %	0.01 %
<i>WTR</i> 2011	0.28 %	0.05 %	0.01 %

Table 26. Epistemic modal operators in every single edition of *WTR*

	must (frequency percentage)	need (frequency percentage)	deontic should (frequency percentage)
<i>WTR</i> 2003	0.02 %	0.03 %	0.07 %
<i>WTR</i> 2004	0.03 %	0.03 %	0.05 %
<i>WTR</i> 2005	0.06 %	0.02 %	0.07 %
<i>WTR</i> 2006	0.11 %	0.05 %	0.08 %
<i>WTR</i> 2007	0.04 %	0.03 %	0.09 %
<i>WTR</i> 2008	0.02 %	0.03 %	0.02 %
<i>WTR</i> 2009	0.08 %	0.03 %	0.05 %

<i>WTR</i> 2010	0.04 %	0.02 %	0.05 %
<i>WTR</i> 2011	0.02 %	0.02 %	0.06 %

Table 27. Deontic modal operators in every single edition of *WTR*

Stability in the handling of modality appears to correspond to a relative stability in the text type profile, which tends to see an alternation of narrative and expository units throughout the reports. Both text types are generally characterized by an absence of modalization, except for narrative texts when the actions or events recorded are potentially ambiguous or when they are not supported by unquestionable evidence and are therefore subject to more than one interpretation or to rectification; in all these cases narration requires recourse to epistemic modality. The occasional use of deontic modality in *WTRs* is connected with instruction and is limited to the few directive passages in the *Forewords* and in the closing sections. The slight differences in the frequency percentages of deontic operators over the nine years of publication of *WTRs* depend on the length of instructive units in the close to each report. The highest frequency percentages for deontic markers can be found in the report issued in 2006, which analyzes the use of subsidies in the multilateral trading system and reports on agreements reached in this delicate field through WTO's tactful diplomacy, often quoting from normative documents which naturally abound in markers of deontic modality.

The analysis of modality in the periodical reports published by FAO, WHO and the WTO has evidenced a regular shift from epistemic or zero modality in propositions to deontic modality in proposals. This finding establishes a strong parallelism between the text type profile and the role of modalization in these texts, which suggests a further interesting parallelism between the ideational dimension, surfacing in representational strategies, and the interpersonal dimension, emerging from a study of the two categories of person and modality.

This exploration of institutional reports in search of pragmatic and linguistic features capable of revealing some aspects of the underlying network of relationships established between authorship and readership, has opened up interesting areas of analysis, which may be further delved into from a genre-analytical approach to institutional discourse with a view to uncovering the interplay between overt and covert communicative purposes. This genre-analytical perspective on institutional reports will be adopted in the next chapter.

Chapter VI

Generic integrity in institutional reports

1. Are institutional reports a genre?

In this chapter I will examine the reports drafted by international organizations from a genre-analytical perspective. The underlying hypothesis is that, though inevitably different in the topics covered and in some textual and contextual features, the institutional reports making up the three subcorpora do share a number of discursive traits. In the first place, they all seem to serve the same communicative purpose: raising awareness and spurring the readership to common action in some humanitarian cause. However, an objection has been raised by sociologists as well as political scientists and discourse analysts¹ as to whether international organizations authoring periodical reports really aim to inform the public and elicit a concrete response from stakeholders around the world or whether they rather pursue objectives of self-enactment and self-legitimization in an attempt to establish a hegemonic discourse on globalization and development by representing the neo-liberal model of economy as the only possible.

In light of the textual analysis conducted in chapter IV and of the study of the interpersonal categories of person and modality carried out in chapter V, I will now explore the generic structure of institutional reports in terms of communicative purpose and rhetorical moves with a view to verifying the hypothesis that the texts in the corpus are all samples of one and the same genre and to ascertain whether there are signs of hybridity in this genre. To this end I will deploy a qualitative approach based on a close reading of the texts aiming to evaluate content organization and purpose.

The preliminary exploration of the underlying textual structure will offer a point of departure for genre analysis in that a profile of text types in institutional reports may provide useful indications as to the distribution of information-giving and action-demanding units or – in Hallidayan terms – propositions and proposals. Obviously, no clear correspondence can be established between text types and rhetorical moves, yet the alternation of propositions and proposals seems to function as a modelling pattern presiding over the organization of cognitive-rhetorical units.

The first step in the generic analysis of the reports drafted by FAO, WHO and the WTO will thus consist in identifying the move structure underlying these

¹ The linguists and political scientists as well as economists featuring in Rist's collection of essays already discussed in Chapter II.

texts with a view to tracing regularities. The reports drafted by the two UN Agencies – that is to say the texts in the first two subcorpora – will be jointly examined in search of rhetorical moves, while the reports issued by the World Trade Organization will be examined separately on account of the different context in which they originate. The cognitive units emerging from macro-level content analysis will be assigned a label – usually a nominalizing ing-form followed by an object and/or an adverbial², e.g. “establishing credentials”, or “providing a narrative of recent trends in trade” – indicating their communicative function. Regularities will be examined within each subcorpus, while a comparative study of subcorpora will detect similarities and differences and their significance in the construction of the genre.

A study of move repetition and move density in each subcorpus and across subcorpora will be the next step in the research. As a matter of fact, it often happens that moves do not appear once only in a text sample: they may be repeated or split between initial, central and final position. Moreover, moves are not always easy to isolate and define: on the contrary, there may be hybridizing transitions from one move to the next. An interesting feature of generic structure is the move/token ratio (Gillaerts forthcoming), which is worked out on the basis of how many moves are traceable in a genre and how many times they occur in a given sample of the genre.

The final crucial step in genre definition will be a study of communicative purpose with a view to identifying overt and covert aims and possible signs of interdiscursivity. As already hinted in Chapter II, genres sometimes bear traces of the rhetorical model or antecedent genre they stem from (Jamieson 1975). It also happens that they become colonized by other genres, which invade their generic integrity or interdiscursively establish a new integrity (Bhatia 1993; 2004; 2010; Candlin 1997; Fairclough 1995b; 2003). Indeed, genres are subject to change in time – subtle, almost imperceptible change in some cases, marked and easily measurable change in other cases, when genre tradition is less consolidated. That is why generic integrity is a set of historically positioned rhetorical features, which may shift across different discourse areas as a function of shifting communicative purposes. This research focuses on the generic structure of institutional reports. The texts making up the corpus are examined in search of regularities with a view to verifying the hypothesis that they are all members of a colony of genres – what Bhatia terms the “colony of reporting genres” – cutting across disciplinary domains and consequently showing a varying degree of inherent interdiscursivity (Bhatia 2004: 81-84).

² For a definition of objects and adverbials, see Ballard 2001.

2. Generic structure of institutional reports

2. 1. Rhetorical moves in the reports of two UN agencies

A close reading of *The State of Food Insecurity in the World* and of *The World Health Report* aiming to verify my hypothesis that institutional reports are a genre in their full right has shown some form of parallelism between the text-type profile underlying these texts and the generic pattern emerging from them, while at the same time revealing a fundamental similarity in the cognitive structure of reports in the two subcorpora, in terms of both communicative purpose and rhetorical moves. As a matter of fact, it is possible to identify four basic moves in subcorpus I (FAO) and II (WHO), each performing a precise communicative function within the overall double purpose of raising awareness and eliciting commitment:

1. establishing credentials,
2. providing updated information about the “state of the art”,
3. illustrating the unfinished agenda,
4. soliciting response.

The descriptive-narrative focus which has proved to dominate these texts when they provide information about food insecurity and health vulnerability, as well as action taken by international organizations aiming to improve nutrition or health status, has led – through a useful combination with content analysis – to the identification of the first three moves. As a matter of fact, description appears to be usually associated with moves one, two and three, while narration seems to mark move one and two, and instruction signals a shift to move four. Elements of exposition are sometimes traceable in the first three moves, notably in subcorpus II (WHO).

As to move one, *SOFIs* open with a list of the members of the Inter Agency Working Group (IAWG) collaborating in the Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information and Mapping System (FIVIMS). FAO is a member of this group and the publication of *The State of Food Insecurity around the World* represents its contribution to FIVIMS. Almost all editions of *SOFI* include a short preliminary section which illustrates the objectives of the Mapping System and membership in the IAWG-FIVIMS group. This is the account which the 2000 issue provides of FIVIMS aims and of FAO’s role in the mapping of food insecurity:

- (1) This publication represents a substantial contribution to the objectives of FIVIMS, namely, to:
 - increase global attention to problems of food insecurity;
 - improve data quality and analysis through the development of new tools and capacity building in developing countries;
 - promote effective and better directed action aimed at reducing food insecurity and poverty;

- promote donor collaboration on food security information systems at the global and country levels;
- improve access to information through networking and sharing. (*SOFI* 2000)

The same edition also provides a brief history of the Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information and Mapping System:

- (2) Before the launching of FIVIMS in 1997, IAWG member institutions were already working to improve food security information systems around the world. We still are. Through FIVIMS, we are also increasing efforts within our institutions while reducing duplication and ensuring that our collective work is efficient and complementary. As part of the UN system reform process, we also aim to collaborate more effectively at the country level within the UN Development Assistance Framework. Despite the inevitable institutional challenges, FIVIMS is making significant progress based on solid technical fieldwork enhanced by new computational and communication technologies. (*SOFI* 2000)

There follows a complacent remark of the Inter Agency Working Group on the 2000 edition of *SOFI*:

- (3) IAWG members congratulate the FAO team on this year's report. And we stand committed to making even more substantial contributions in the future to The state of food insecurity in the world. (*SOFI* 2000)

Thus a strong effort is made to obtain attention and esteem on the part of the readership. The opening chapters are usually rich in narrative units introducing success stories which illustrate the victories obtained by FAO and collaborating agencies in the struggle against undernutrition both on a global scale and with a focus on individual regions. Description of challenges, accompanied by statistical updates on the degree and extent of food insecurity around the globe, alternates with narration of progress and setbacks on the way to a hunger-free world. Emphasis tends to be placed on progress, although narration of setbacks usually prevails in quantitative terms. The fact that progress is generally introduced after setbacks have been illustrated, and the frequent choice to embed success stories in boxes, which break the linearity of the text, confers special momentum on those stories, which consequently impress the reader with the effectiveness of FAO and related agencies' activities.

The opening rhetorical move of "establishing credentials" finds a similar realization in *The World Health Report*, which also lavishly acknowledges contribution on the part of a number of agencies, groups and individuals collaborating in report planning, data collection and actual drafting of *WHRs*. All issues, except the one published in 1999, describe the texts as the fruit of pooled expertise and research on the part of a large "community of practice" including health specialists, top members of the managing team of WHO, writers, editors, translators and supervisors, who are mentioned individually in a special box at the beginning of the report and in some issues, when the list would be too long, in the Acknowledgement

section at the end. Readers are thus struck by the overwhelming number of experts authoring these texts, whom they are led to trust on account of their competence and the authoritativeness they are implicitly invested with. Moreover, most editions open with a presentation of challenges and accomplishments in the struggle for a healthier world. In some cases this double presentation is also embedded in the Message from the Director-General. The tone tends to be one of worried complaint over what remains to be done, but there are instances of a triumphant tone over macroscopic improvements boasted as the fruit of hard work on the part of the World Health Organization in collaboration with other institutions and with the International Community at large. This is the case of the 1998, 1999 and 2000 editions, while later issues focus more on the challenges ahead, but even here attention falls on the leading role of WHO, which still has to work hard in order to improve life standards around the globe, but is implicitly recognized as the institution enjoying the highest degree of competence and authoritativeness and consequently in the best possible condition to face health problems. An example of the triumphant ring resonating in some introductory chapters is the opening of Chapter I in *WHR* 1999: “The 20th century has seen a global transformation in human health unmatched in history. The magnitude of this transformation can be illustrated by looking at the example of Chile.” The development of the health system in Chile is then briefly sketched out. What follows is the presentation of the allegedly enormous progress made on a global scale: “This chapter briefly describes this 20th century revolution in human health, then examines both its profound consequences for human demography and its contribution to the worldwide diffusion of rapid economic growth.” The resounding noun phrase “20th century revolution in human health” is duplicated in the title of the next section, which details the spread of improved sanitation:

- (4) The steady improvement in life expectancy that began in Europe in the late 1900s continued virtually without interruption throughout the 20th century. In England and Wales for example, life expectancy was around 40 years in the late 19th century; but by early in the 20th century it had risen to almost 50 years. Other countries experienced similar take-off periods. In Europe these mostly occurred in the late 19th or early 20th century. Economic historians and demographers debate the genesis of these increases in life expectancy, but the increases appear to be at least partially linked to the economic changes resulting from the agricultural and industrial revolutions. (*WHR* 1999)

“Better health and nutritional status” are seen to be correlated to income growth through a double link of cause and effect. The tone remains triumphant in the promise to show – in the following sections – how the health revolution has affected the world’s demography and global economic growth:

- (5) The 20th century global revolution in health transformed – and is transforming – not only the quality of individual lives, but also the demography of populations. These changed health and demographic circumstances have themselves contributed to wide diffusion of economic growth. (*WHR* 1999)

WHO thus features as a hero in the war against disease and premature death. In so doing, it establishes its credentials as a first move towards the achievement of its communicative purpose.

The second rhetorical move is realized – like the first – through an essentially information-giving textual unit. “Providing up-dated information about the state of the art” is amply traceable both in *SOFIs* and in *WHRs* after credentials have been established. This move generally makes up the bulk of the report, a text form which by definition consists in the presentation of statistical up-dates and an illustration of problematic areas and results obtained. The transition from the first to the second move tends to be soft, in some cases even imperceptible: from obtaining credibility through the boasting of results to detailing them by providing an in-depth analysis of data, which are usually organized around a thematic nucleus – the price crisis, emergency situations, mental illness, maternal and child care, etc. Thus, the opening chapters of *SOFI* 1999 illustrate undernourishment around the world, trying to locate hungry people and to draw a profile of vulnerability. The three central chapters of *SOFI* 2000 focus on estimates and projections of hunger and on the prevalence and depth of hunger as well as the spectrum of malnutrition, to then narrate the success story of Ghana and Nigeria, whose food security has been boosted by research on cassava. Chapter II of *SOFI* 2001 introduces assessment of the “nutritional status and vulnerability”, while chapters I and II of *SOFI* 2002 discuss the link between hunger and mortality and the vulnerability of mountain environments and mountain people. The first two chapters in *SOFI* 2003 introduce the latest estimates on undernourishment and provide data about the link between international trade and food security. Chapter I of *SOFI* 2004 attempts to count the hungry and measure hunger, providing estimates with an eye on the human and economic costs of hunger, while chapter II analyzes the effects of globalization and urbanization on changing food systems in developing countries. The bulk of *SOFI* 2005 consists in detailing the causal link between such factors as economic growth, governance, education and gender equality on the one hand and hunger reduction on the other. Also *SOFI* 2006 and *SOFI* 2009 largely consist in the presentation of up-dates on undernourishment both on a global scale and in individual regions, though the 2009 edition focuses more on the impact which the global economic crisis has had on food security. The first two chapters of *SOFI* 2008 study the effect of high food prices on food security, while *SOFI* 2010 analyzes the problems facing countries in protracted crisis and the national and international responses. Finally, chapter II of *SOFI* 2011 focuses on the costs and benefits of recent trends in world food commodity prices.

Similarly, *WHRs* softly shift from the first move of establishing credibility by emphasizing results obtained in the struggle for a healthier world to the second move of providing up-dated information on mankind’s global health status. Thus,

chapters II and III of *WHR* 1998 give an account of health measuring practices and of how health standards can be improved and have been improved across the life span. Chapter II of *WHR* 1999 illustrates the double burden of emerging epidemics and persistent problems. Chapters I, II and III of *WHR* 2000 examine health systems, what functions they perform and how they have evolved, measuring goal achievement and organizational failings. The first two chapters in *WHR* 2001 provide data on mental and behavioural disorders and illustrate an integrated public health approach to mental illness. The bulk of *WHR* 2002 consists in the detailing of risks to health and the many factors underlying those risks. *WHR* 2003 opens with a chapter introducing a global picture of both infant and adult health; the report then goes on in chapters from III to VI to examine individual disorders whose disruptive potential on the lives of individuals and families is explored in all its ominous implications. The opening chapter of *WHR* 2004 provides up-dates on the global emergency of HIV/AIDS, while Chapter II of *WHR* 2005 illustrates the situation of maternal care and the obstacles on the way to universal health coverage for both mothers and children. Chapter I of the 2006 edition of *WHR* draws a profile of global health workers, while the bulk of *WHR* 2007 is a study of threats to public health security. The opening chapter of *WHR* 2008 deals with a variety of issues, from the challenges of unequal growth to trends undermining health systems, from rising expectations of health equity to primary health care reform. Finally, the first three chapters of *WHR* 2010 explore the financing systems of health care, pointing to weaknesses and failings. These are only a handful of examples of how the “state of the art” is illustrated.

Move three, “illustrating the unfinished agenda”, consists in a further information-giving unit of variable length. Here again transition from move two to move three is smoothly managed through an almost imperceptible shift from detailing results to illustrating challenges ahead. “The way ahead” is the most frequent title of the final section or chapter which enacts this move in *SOFIs*, while in *WHRs* move three is often recurrent within one and the same document. As a matter of fact, the presentation of results in a medical area or in a region is sometimes interrupted by a description of what remains to be done. This tendency to repeat move three corresponds to fragmentation of move two, which is often interrupted by the indication of still unattained goals, to then be resumed with the illustration of further problematic areas. Thus, the linearity of move two is broken by the dispersal of move three through the extended presentation of results obtained by the World Health Organization in its effort to improve global health. For example, *WHR* 2003 analyzes a number of medical problems – from HIV to polio, SARS and cardiovascular disease – by first providing and describing data to then move on to the suggestion of viable therapeutic strategies and prevention policies. Details about move repetition and move density will be discussed in the next section. For the purposes of move analysis, searching *WHRs* for move three

must take its recurrent nature into account as its position within each document is not strictly final or pre-final. Moreover, titles do not always carry a clear indication of the future-oriented description of what remains to be done. Only seven of the twelve texts in the subcorpus – the first four and the last three – have section or chapter headings which define the cognitive-rhetorical unit “illustrating the unfinished agenda”. Thus, the last chapter in *WHR* 1998 bears the title “Health agenda for the 21st century”, while *WHR* 1999 closes chapter I with the section “The unfinished agenda” and all subsequent chapters with sections describing the way ahead. *WHR* 2000 places the section “What are the challenges?” in pre-final position, and *WHR* 2001 closes with the chapter “The way forward”, which reappears as the title of the last chapter in *WHR* 2008. *WHR* 2007 introduces a chapter on persistent risks to health – pandemic influenza, drug-resistant tuberculosis and polio – “Learning lessons, thinking ahead” – in pre-final position. Finally, “An agenda for action” is the title of the closing chapter of *WHR* 2010. On the contrary, the issues of *The World Health Report* published between 2002 and 2007 do not encapsulate move three in textual units whose cognitive function is clearly signalled by such macrostructures of meaning as the heading. The reason for this lack of labelling largely lies in the recurrence of the move throughout the document. Thus, *WHR* 2002 illustrates risks to health, strategies for reducing them and for promoting healthy life; in so doing, the description of the present state of things is regularly accompanied by a detailing of the health protection agenda. Similarly, *WHR* 2003, whose title is *Shaping the Future*, combines analysis of present-day medical problems – both epidemics and chronic disorders – with prospects for both short- and long-term improvement. *WHR* 2004, *Changing history*, analyzes various aspects of the HIV epidemic in its five chapters, each time alternating presentation of the “state of the art” and illustration of challenges ahead. In *WHR* 2005, the first four chapters focus on achievements and setbacks in the field of maternal and infant care, while the last two chapters design pathways for future action, and chapter V provides a transition between the two sets in that it starts with the detailing of risks to life in its beginning, to then shift to “Planning for universal access”. *WHR* 2006, *Working together for health*, consists in an initial chapter detailing the global health workforce, followed by six chapters analysing different aspects of workforce management, all of them organized as a modular repetition of the same pattern: illustrating the unfinished agenda and envisaging strategies for action.

Of all four moves, the fourth, “soliciting response” is the only action-demanding cognitive unit in the reports published by FAO and WHO. It is in this unit that commitment is elicited from the readership, in particular from those stakeholders who play an active role in the shaping of policies and in decision-making. In this self-same unit the authorship commits itself to a course of action with reference to the unfinished agenda illustrated in the preceding unit. So here

again transition from move three to move four tends to be soft, with partial overlaps of unmarked move boundaries in that the presentation of the challenges ahead naturally leads to a call to arms. Very often, the two moves are realized by one and the same section – “The way ahead”, or “Challenges ahead” – or move four is embedded in move three, as when the authorship of *The World Health Report* refrains from directly asking the International Community to take action, but still through the illustration of problematic issues and areas indirectly points to the desirability of collaboration in the global strife for a healthier world. The double nature of this action-demanding unit, which is both directive and self-directed, is signalled by the frequent recourse to the first person plural, in its inclusive as well as exclusive meaning. Another interesting feature of move four, which will be studied in greater detail in the next section, is its repetition within the texts, split as it is between initial and final position. As a matter of fact, the reports issued by the two UN Agencies both open and close with an appeal to the International Community for concerted action in the supreme struggle against the great enemies to universal welfare: undernourishment and disease. However, the two subcorpora differ in the degree of regularity and predictability of this duplication of move four, which appears twice in *SOFIs*, while occurrences in *WHRs* vary in number and position. Thus, FAO’s Director-General invariably addresses the readership in his Foreword, pleading for a strenuous effort in favour of food security, which is also warmly required in the final chapter or section of each report, whereas *WHRs* are generally less obtrusive in their demand for action, both in the initial Message from the Director-General and in the instructive units, which tend to be less explicit than the corresponding units in *SOFIs* and do not necessarily coincide with the close of the report as a consequence of the modular structure of these texts. Clear examples of the tendency to cyclically repeat sequences of rhetorical moves within one and the same text are *WHRs* 2003 and 2006, which provide data about a number of problematic medical conditions, analyze those data and draw scenarios for the future, to then shift to detailing viable strategies for action.

My conclusion is that the reports in subcorpus I (FAO) and II (WHO) consist in a predictable succession of rhetorical moves or steps in which they realize the overarching communicative purpose of raising awareness and soliciting commitment. They seem to possess a generic integrity of their own, though they may well derive from antecedent genres and be the result of discourse hybridization. This possibility is the hypothesis which I will try to verify in section four.

2. 2. Rhetorical moves in the reports of the World Trade Organization

The *World Trade Reports*, too, have been examined through a close reading approach and on the basis of the text types traced in them. This double-level

analysis has identified a number of regularities in the succession of cognitive-rhetorical units breaking down the overall communicative purpose into a number of predictable functions. Both general purpose and individual functions show features in common with subcorpus I (FAO) and II (WHO). However, there are also striking differences between the first two subcorpora and subcorpus III (WTO). I will try to ascertain in what respects they are similar and in what respects they differ.

The cognitive-rhetorical structure underlying the *World Trade Reports* consists of five moves, with clear-cut boundaries and very few overlaps between neighbouring units, with the exception of move four and five, as we will see. Here again moves were identified on the basis of content analysis integrated into the text type profile emerging from these reports. Thus, it was noted that description functions as a formidable textual macrostructure in the service of boiler-plate³ presentations of the World Trade Organization and its core activity, for purpose statement and whenever there is need to illustrate issues connected with international trade and to provide statistical up-dates. Similarly, it was noted that narration is associated with the detailing of trends in trade, while exposition is a useful resource for the analysis of concepts related to the multilateral trading system and is consequently accessed whenever there is need for such analysis, mostly in move five. Finally, instruction was observed to serve purposes of discussion elicitation. So these are the five rhetorical moves identified in subcorpus III (WTO):

- (1) establishing credentials,
- (2) stating purpose,
- (3) providing a narrative of recent trends in trade,
- (4) illustrating a number of issues related to trade,
- (5) encouraging research, discussion and/or further negotiation.

As to move one, *WTRs*, similarly to *SOFIs* and *WHRs*, open with an Acknowledgement section and a Disclaimer which go a long way in the direction of establishing credentials for the World Trade Organization and its Secretariat, whose mouthpiece and official representative, that is to say the Director-General, explicitly endorses full responsibility for authorship, though acknowledging the competent contribution of a pool of experts. As a matter of fact, the Disclaimer, which is prefaced to each edition in exactly the same wording, attributes full responsibility for *WTR* authorship to the WTO's Secretariat and publishing division:

³ The term "boiler-plate" refers to the analysis of press releases and was introduced by Jacobs 1999.

- (6) The World Trade Report and any opinions reflected therein are the sole responsibility of the WTO Secretariat. They do not purport to reflect the opinions or views of Members of the WTO. The main authors of the Report also wish to exonerate those who have commented upon it from responsibility for any outstanding errors or omissions.

Thus, credibility is established through the adoption of a double strategy, which combines commitment on the part of the highest-ranking authority with the awe-inspiring expertise of the community of practice charged with the task of drafting these texts. Even more positive in its effort to establish credibility for the World Trade Organization is the opening of the *Foreword* to the fifth edition of *WTR*:

- (7) The World Trade Report 2007 is the fifth in a series launched in 2002. This year's Report marks sixty years of multilateralism in trade through the GATT/WTO. On 1 January 1948 the GATT came into being with 23 signatories. Six decades on, at the beginning of next year, we celebrate a WTO with over 150 Members. This is an institution that has changed and grown in fascinating ways, striving to meet the challenges posed by increasingly complex trade relations in a globalizing world. The GATT/WTO has evolved from its comparatively modest focus in the early years on reducing and binding tariffs on manufactured goods to encompass a deeper and wider set of disciplines across a range of policy areas. At the same time, over sixty years the system has brought together a growing number of nations at different levels of development, with varied policy priorities, in a cooperative endeavour to forge an international trade policy regime that promises mutual gain. When we take a long view, as this Report does, it is plain to see that thanks to the commitment and vision of successive governments and cohorts of negotiators, the GATT/WTO has been one of the most successful examples ever of sustained international economic cooperation. At times when progress is slow and agreement elusive, it is as well to remind ourselves of the success story that underpins our institution, and of the challenge of preserving that tradition of cooperation that has served the world so well. (*WTR* 2007)

The sixtieth anniversary since twenty-three countries signed the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade is a golden opportunity which the Director-General of the World Trade Organization seizes to glorify the achievements of the GATT/WTO, thus hopefully capturing the readership's attention and benevolence. True, this glorification of WTO's "success story" is unique in the whole series of *WTRs*, yet it is indicative of the triumphant attitude with which the Secretariat of the organization sets about its task of deepening public understanding of important trade policy issues.

Move two, "stating purpose", regularly opens the *Foreword* to the first four issues of the *World Trade Report*. Thus the Director-General introduces his *Foreword* to *WTR* 2003:

- (8) The World Trade Report is a new annual publication produced by the WTO Secretariat. Each year, the *WTR* will explore trends in world trade and highlight important issues in the world trading system. In addition to monitoring and interpreting trade developments, the Report seeks to deepen public understanding of pressing policy issues. (*WTR* 2003)

This is both a statement of purpose for the WTO's yearly publication and an explicit attribution of authorship to the Secretariat, that is to say the Director-General and his staff, which reinforces the credentials established in move one through Acknowledgement and Disclaimer. *WTR 2007* and all subsequent reports do not include this statement of purpose in the *Foreword*; on the contrary, the two latest issues – *WTR 2010* and *2011* – place it in initial position in a special fact-file page providing a definition of the *World Trade Report*, instructions on how to use the text and contacts. The definition featuring here is perfectly coincident with the one included in the *Foreword* of previous editions:

- (9) The World Trade Report is an annual publication that aims to deepen understanding about trends in trade, trade policy issues and the multilateral trading system. (*WTR 2010*)

Move three, “providing a narrative of trends in trade”, represents the first part of the *World Trade Report*, as the Director-General indicates in the metadiscursive instructions he includes in his *Forewords*. An example may be quoted from *WTR 2004*:

- (10) Like last year, the Report begins with a review of recent world trade developments. (*WTR 2004*)

The first chapter or chapters of the WTO's reports invariably consist in a study of recent trends in trade and trade policy developments.

Move four, “illustrating a number of issues related to trade”, is realized in the second part – sometimes also in an additional third part – of each report. Here texts introduce some specific issue connected with international trade. Thus, *WTR 2003* explores the role of trade and trade policy in the development process, to then go on to detail the Doha Development Agenda. *WTR 2004* analyzes the theme of coherence in international trade and macroeconomic policy and the role of infrastructure in trade and economic development. *WTR 2005* examines the relationships between trade, standards and the WTO in part II and introduces three thematic essays in part III. *WTR 2006* tackles the question of subsidies, trade and the role of the WTO, while *WTR 2007* illustrates the lessons learnt from six decades of multilateral trade cooperation. *WTR 2008* studies trade in a globalizing world, while *WTR 2009* analyzes trade policy commitments and contingency measures. *WTR 2010* deals with trade in natural resources and *WTR 2011* details preferential trade agreements. Move four appears to be the largest cognitive-rhetorical unit in the report, consisting in a number of chapters. Though heterogeneous in the topics covered, it is easily recognizable by virtue of its descriptive-expository character, marked as it is by third-person subjects and epistemic or zero modality.

Move five, “encouraging research, discussion and/or further negotiation”, shows great variability in its realization across the nine editions of the *World*

Trade Report, both in its position within the texts and in the degree of its explicitness. As to the position of move five in the reports, it is split between initial and final position, that is to say between the Director-General's *Foreword* and the conclusions, winding up either the whole document or individual chapters. In the two latest editions this move somehow exceeds the boundaries of the published text in that the online version of *WTR 2010* and *WTR 2011* provides a link giving access to a discussion forum on the topic of the report. By clicking on the link the surfer can send in contributions in the form of articles, which are then published on the Forum for everybody to read and comment on. In this way an opportunity is offered for feedback and interaction between authorship and readership, which is explicitly placed beyond the text. The fact that the Forum is no integral part of the report is clearly indicated by the Director-General declining authorial responsibility for the documents posted on it:

- (11) This Forum seeks to promote an informed debate on trade in natural resources — the topic of the World Trade Report 2010. Documents posted on the Forum are the sole responsibility of their authors. They have no legal effect on the rights and obligations of WTO members, nor do they imply any judgment on the part of the WTO Secretariat regarding the consistency of any policy with the provisions of the WTO agreements.

(http://www.wto.org/english/res_e/publications_e/wtr10_forum_e.htm)

As to the degree of explicitness of move five, it seems to vary across texts, though generally speaking it is more subtly handled than the corresponding action-demanding unit in subcorpus I (FAO) and II (WHO). The instructive nature of this move is signalled primarily by the use of deontic modal operators, which make it easily identifiable in spite of frequent overlaps with information-giving units. As a matter of fact, “conclusions” sections are often primarily a brief summary of the topics covered and only in the last paragraph/s do they introduce suggestions for further research and negotiation activities. Introductory *Forewords*, too, often intertwine information of a metadiscursive nature about content organization in the report with instructions on what research and discussion is still needed in trade issues. Here, however, recourse to first person pronouns clearly indicates authorial involvement and personal commitment in the request for action, thus signalling a dominant contextual focus on the composition of future behaviour, which is typical of proposals. An example is the *Foreword* to *WTR 2009*:

- (12) Finally, we know from experience that resorting to contingency protection is influenced by external circumstances and “atmospherics”. In these challenging times, governments have agreed to exercise restraint. I am convinced that such undertakings will be easier to maintain and to sell to public opinion in an environment where governments have demonstrated their ability and willingness to make common cause in trade policy matters. This is yet another reason why I remain convinced of the need to take the necessary decisions to complete the Doha Round sooner rather than later. (*WTR 2009*)

In spite of overlaps between propositions and proposals and notwithstanding the indirect character of requests, originating from details on the need to act rather than an explicit demand for action, this last move still preserves its instructive nature.

In conclusion, the *World Trade Reports* evidence a generic pattern of rhetorical moves which is similar to the one emerging from FAO's and WHO's reports in the composition of information-giving and action-demanding units. Also, move one of *WTRs* coincides with the opening move of *SOFIs* and *WHRs*. A further similarity lies in the occasional breaking of the linearity of the textual as well as cognitive-rhetorical structure of the reports under analysis when boxes of text containing special highlights are embedded in sections realizing move two or three of subcorpus I (FAO) and II (WHO), or move three or four of subcorpus III (WTO).

Differences lie in the handling of transitions between successive moves, which tends to be soft, at times even blurred in *SOFIs* and *WHR*, while *WTRs* seem to prefer clearcut boundaries and sharp shifts, with the exception of move five, which often appears to be intertwined with move four or to naturally spring from it. Differences in content organization between subcorpus III (WTO) and the first two subcorpora seem to be based on their different model, that is to say the antecedent genre or, more generally, the discourse area they stem from: corporate communication in the case of *WTRs* and philanthropic fundraising for *SOFIs* and *WHRs*. Considering its importance in the process of establishing generic integrity, interdiscursivity will be analyzed in section 4 with a view to positioning institutional reports within what Bhatia calls "the colony of reporting genres" (Bhatia 2004: 81-84).

3. Move recurrence

A close reading of subcorpora has led both first and second coder to hypothesize the recurrence of rhetorical moves in subcorpus II (WHO). The modular structure of the text type profile emerging from the *World Health Reports* accounts for move repetition in these texts, which often appear to accumulate studies in various areas of health and sanitary intervention. Each study tends to duplicate the consolidated sequence of description, narration and instruction which characterizes the analysis of problematic medical conditions and viable therapeutic strategies as well as the exploration of health care systems and the means of financing them. Thus, moves two to four are prone to being repeated alongside with the repetition of text types. Moreover, move four, "soliciting response", appears to frame the texts drafted by FAO and WHO with its split position at the beginning of each text – in the introductory *Foreword* or *Message* – and in the closing section or chapter, in which the international community is spurred to join in the struggle against undernutrition and disease. Thus, an

overarching promotional purpose seems to underlie FAO's and WHO's reports, which by virtue of the inherently moral nature of the two organizations' mandate establish themselves as an instructive call to arms, made more persuasive by the richly informative textual units which provide data about food security and health, but are at the same time imbued with the promotional flavour of the emotional appeal to personal commitment which encases them.

Subcorpus III (WTO), on the other hand, evidences very little sign of move repetition. However, as already noticed in *SOFIs* and *WHRs*, here too the instructive move “encouraging research, discussion and/or further negotiation” tends to be split between initial and final position, that is to say between the *Foreword* and the closing section or chapter. However, the subdued nature of the appeal reduces its emotional impact on the reader and makes it less obtrusive, somehow obfuscating its prominence and concealing all promotional intent from these texts. Whether promotional purposes are really alien to the *World Trade Reports* is, however, a debatable question, which may be further investigated.

As regards move density, its calculation is based on the move/token ratio⁴, which is modelled on the type/token ratio automatically worked out by WordSmith Tools 4.0 with a view to appreciating lexical density in a text or corpus. As the type/token ratio is the value of a fraction whose numerator represents the number of lexical items occurring in a given corpus and whose denominator corresponds to the total number of occurrences of all lexical items, so the move/token ratio is the value of a fraction in which the numerator coincides with the average number of moves traceable in the texts making up the corpus under analysis, while the denominator stands for the average number of occurrences of all the moves in the corpus. The numerator remaining the same, as with our fixed number of moves in each subcorpus, the higher the denominator, the lower the value of the fraction or “move/token ratio”. A high ratio indicates high move density, whereas a low ratio indicates low move density, as density is directly proportional to the value of the fraction, both with lexical density and with move density. Calculation of move density is made possible by manually counting the number of occurrences of each move in every single text of the subcorpus and then working out the average number of occurrences of each move in the subcorpus under analysis. Thus, subcorpus I (FAO) shows the following average number of occurrences for each move and the following move/token ratio:

establishing credentials	1
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⁴ For move repetition and move density, see Gillaerts forthcoming.

providing updated information about the “state of the art”	1
illustrating the unfinished agenda	1
soliciting response	2
move/token ratio	4/5=0.8

Table 1. Move/token ratio in subcorpus I

Subcorpus II (WHO) evidences the following average number of occurrences for each move and the following move/token ratio, which is decidedly lower than that of subcorpus I (FAO) on account of the occasional repetition of moves two, three and four:

establishing credentials	1
providing updated information about the “state of the art”	3.4
illustrating the unfinished agenda	4.6
soliciting response	3.5
move/token ratio	4/12.5=0.32

Table 2 Move/token ratio in subcorpus II

Subcorpus III (WTO) shows the following average number of occurrences for each move and the following move/token ratio, which is very close to the one emerging from subcorpus I (FAO) on account of the coincidence between move types and move tokens, with the exception of the closing move, which tends to occur twice – in initial and final position – both in subcorpus I (FAO) and in subcorpus III (WTO):

establishing credentials	1
stating purpose	1

providing a narrative of recent trends in trade	1
illustrating a number of issues related to trade	1
encouraging research, discussion and/or further negotiation	2
move/token ratio	5/6=0.83

Table 3. Move/token ratio in subcorpus III

Similar move/token ratios for subcorpus I (FAO) and III (WTO) appear to be connected to the straightforward alternation of information-giving units – in the description of results, narration of progress and setbacks and illustration of the challenges which still face mankind – and action-requiring units – in the call to arms aiming to spur the international community to pool energies in the common struggle against undernourishment and economic and commercial isolation. The lower move/token ratio for subcorpus II (WHO), which clearly indicates a lower move density, seems to spring from the need to cover as many issues as possible in the limited space of an annual report. As a matter of fact, *WHRs* too, like *SOFIs* and *WTRs*, are thematic texts which specifically focus on some topical question, as subtitles rather transparently reveal: *Life in the 21st century. A vision for all* (WHR 1998), *Making a Difference* (WHR 1999), *Health Systems: Improving Performance* (WHR 2000), *Mental Health: New Understanding, New Hope* (WHR 2001), *Reducing Risks, Promoting Healthy Life* (WHR 2002), *Shaping the Future* (WHR 2003), *Changing History* (WHR 2004), *Make every mother and child count* (WHR 2005), *Working together for health* (WHR 2006), *A safer future. Global public health security in the 21st century* (WHR 2007), *Primary Health Care* (WHR 2008), *Health Systems Financing. The path to universal coverage* (WHR 2010). However, in their attempt to tackle the widest possible spectrum of problematic conditions, they tend to re-enact moves through a reproduction of the proposition-proposal sequence whenever a new issue is introduced.

Another motive may lurk in the lower move density of subcorpus II (WHO): the need to provide the reader with a problem-solving paradigm in which every new challenge to health is associated with a range of suggested options for the international community to choose from. This problem-solving approach appears to descend from the multi-front nature of the World Health Organization's struggle against disease, both in the form of chronic disorder and in that of old and new epidemics. Whether this struggle is a merely discursive activity or whether it is conducive to the adoption of health policies on the part of regional, national and

local authorities may be a matter of debate, but WHO can claim to do what is in its power – an inherently discursive power – to urge advances in global health.

4. Appropriation of generic resources and discourse hybridization

As already noticed in section two, some of the rhetorical moves emerging from texts in the three subcorpora are identical with moves typical of genres from other areas of discourse, notably philanthropic fundraising and corporate communication. Bhatia has investigated genre hybridization through genre mixing and embedding as well as genre bending (Bhatia 2004: 87-95), by exploring the ways in which generic resources – whether lexico-grammatical, rhetorical or discursive – are appropriated by a number of areas within academic and professional discourse. This “invasion of territorial integrity”, as Bhatia terms it, originates in the dynamic quality of the world we live in and in the multidisciplinary nature of the activities – professional, institutional and private – we engage in. Thus, a pervasive promotionalization or “marketization” of discourse has silently set in (Bhatia 2004: 87-111; Fairclough 1995b: 130-166), and advertising practices have gradually colonized diverse discourse areas, from academic to political, media and corporate communication (Bhatia 2004: 88), generating overlaps between informative and promotional functions in genres serving an inherently informative purpose, like academic course descriptions, news stories and company reports. Among the examples provided by Bhatia are sales promotion letters, job application letters and fundraising letters (Bhatia 1993: 45-75), which display interesting similarities in their move structure notwithstanding the different discourse areas they belong to, the first two originating in business settings, while the third is a typical genre of philanthropic discourse. In particular, the three genres share three crucial moves: establishing credentials, enclosing documents and soliciting response. Some of these moves can also be traced in the institutional reports making up the corpus under analysis in this research, which may seem a rather surprising finding, considering the intrinsically informative function attached to reporting. The truth is that the aseptic objectivity which is usually required of a report has proved to be more of a myth than a reality in the populous colony of reporting genres (Bhatia 2004: 81-84). An example is provided by annual reports drafted by companies, which are, as one would expect, a minute account of gains and losses, expenditures and profits, yet open with the Chief Executive Officer’s Letter⁵, in which the CEO addresses shareholders and, more generally, stakeholders, to comment on the results obtained over the past year and to envisage future action. These letters aim to be regarded as objective accounts of the company’s activities, though they serve a mixture of informative and promotional purposes in their attempt to

⁵ See Garzone 2004; 2008.

establish the company's reputation as a sound enterprise. As Garzone (Garzone 2004: 322) points out, they

- a) provide a concise account of and justification for the company's activities and performance;
- b) demonstrate that the policies enacted are the best possible under the circumstances;
- c) get across to investors and potential investors the idea that the company's management deserves investors' confidence;
- d) transmit a positive, attractive corporate image.

Thus promotional intents appear to be intertwined with the alleged aim of the CEO's Letter to guide the reader through the intricate maze of financial data which make up the annual report.

A similar multiplicity of purposes can be detected in the institutional reports drafted by FAO, WHO and WTO, which combine a fundamental awareness-raising function with a call to arms in some humanitarian cause. Yet, underlying these explicit aims lurks another unacknowledged though crucial purpose, consisting in what Bhatia calls the "promotion of self", that is to say the attempt to legitimize the activity and the very existence of the organizations authoring these texts. Like company reports, institutional reports consist in long texts detailing progress and setbacks in the achievement of the organization's mandate, prefaced by a brief letter-like *Foreword* or *Message*, in which the organization's Director-General addresses the envisaged readership – the community of global stakeholders, which should ideally coincide with the whole of mankind – to draw their attention to the main topics covered in the report – the problems or questions tackled, the strategies adopted or suggested with a view to solving those problems, as well as the wealth of statistical updates serving the declared purpose of these texts, which by definition "report" on the latest facts and events of what features as the "core mission" of the intergovernmental bodies issuing them. This introductory text thus provides the metadiscursive coordinates for a rapid and effective reading of the report itself, but at the same time aims to steer the readers' interest and benevolence towards the cause in which the organization is engaged and in which it tries to involve governments, NGOs and other groups as well as private citizens. The double purpose of raising awareness and generating commitment is served by the report as a whole, yet it surfaces rather transparently in each *Foreword*, which both introduces and epitomizes the text it is prefaced to. The complex nature and polyvalent function of the *Forewords* turns them into extremely interesting objects of analysis, whose study may shed precious light on the knot of communicative purposes at the heart of institutional reports and on the interdiscursive quality of this genre. That is why they will be scrutinized in their textual structure and discursive features in the next chapter, with a view to uncovering covert purposes and their hybridizing implications on the genre and to exploring the interpersonal component (Garzone 2004) in institutional reporting, that is to say that dimension of communication, identified by Halliday alongside

the ideational sphere (Halliday / Matthiessen 2004), which pivots on the network of relationships being established between authors and recipients by a given text.

Chapter VII

Forewords and Messages: progress and change in the discursive representation of international organizations

1. A letter-like preface

Garzone defines the communicative purposes and format of the CEO's Letter prefacing Annual Corporate Reports in the following terms (Garzone 2004: 322):

Like other components of the Company report, by definition Letters to Shareholders are committed to the primary purpose of providing objective information on the company's performance, strategies and plans [...]. This requires them to be neutral, objective and independent, essentially conveying 'ideational' content. However, in actual fact, the interpersonal component, already inherent to some extent in the letter format, has been gaining ever more importance [...].

Thus, both the ideational and the interpersonal dimensions of communication enjoy prominence in this letter-like discursive product which can be read either as a text in its own right, preceding the report issued yearly by a given company, or as part of the annual report, which is actually introduced by the CEO's Letter.

Similarly to the CEO's Letter, the *Foreword* or *Message* from the Director-General prefacing institutional reports enjoys the double status of independent text and introduction to the reports proper. It is in their function as autonomous prefaces that *Forewords* and *Messages* will be analyzed in this chapter. The underlying hypothesis is that, like Letters to Shareholders, these texts serve the double purpose of providing information and establishing emotional contact between authors and readers: on the one hand, they appear to report on what has been done and what remains to be done in the struggle to eradicate the great evils afflicting mankind, while on the other hand they address global stakeholders in order to win them over to the "cause", emphasizing the role every single member of the readership can play in this struggle and the unique contribution they can make to forge history. Thus, informative and persuasive functions merge into a representation of mankind's future which is apparently characterized by the dominance of the optimistic faith in the predictable unfolding of a process of unstoppable progress.

As opposed to CEO's Letters, these texts do not open with the typical introductory salutation 'Dear ...', yet a close reading of *Forewords* and *Messages* reveals their letter-like structure in a number of discursive features, first and foremost the deictic element 'person'. The abundance of first-person forms is typically associated with the letter format. The generalized preference for the first person plural over the second person, which also tends to be a typical feature of

letters, may signal a predominance of self-directiveness over directiveness in texts serving the primary purpose of generating commitment and therefore emphasizing collaboration and aim sharing, hence the adoption of inclusive ‘we’. The directive – or, better, self-directive – nature of these texts is also revealed by the prominence of deontic modality in the *Forewords* to *The State of Food Insecurity* and in the *Messages* prefacing *The World Health Report*, while the *Forewords* to the *World Trade Report* appear to avoid the adoption of an explicitly directive tone and consequently show a much more limited use of deontic forms.

There is another letter-like genre which may have influenced a few microlinguistic features of the Director-General’s preface to institutional reports: the fundraising letter, which has already been examined in its function as “antecedent genre” to the reports proper and which here forces attention on account of its obvious similarity with *Forewords* and *Messages* in terms of format. A similar handling of the interpersonal “metafunction” seems to emerge from a close reading of our subcorpus against control samples of the fundraising-letter genre¹. In particular, the emotional appeal to the addressees finds textual realization in the adoption of linguistically comparable strategies, consisting – for both genres – in writer- and reader-engaging first-person forms and in a marked preference for deontic modal operators over markers of epistemic or zero modality.

Having examined some general similarities between the texts in our subcorpus and other letter-like genres, the focus will now shift on a number of linguistic choices made by the authors when addressing their readers at the beginning of each report. In the course of the analysis one should never lose sight of the fact that in prefacing their personal contribution to the report, Director-Generals – and their writing staff – provide a lens through which all the data and up-dates in the main text are meant to be read. Thus, far from being mere embellishments adding a personal tone to what would otherwise be an arid presentation of facts and figures, these “prefaces” may prove to function as strategic tools in the service of reader-orienting purposes by virtue of the empathetic quality of their appeal, which is made more vibrant by the letter format.

1. 1. Study design

Aiming to uncover those reader-orienting purposes, this chapter will explore some of the discursive features of *Forewords* and *Messages* to the reports drafted by FAO, WHO and the WTO, with a view to tracing regularities in the handling of agentivity and to analysing the significance of some strategic lexical choices, in an attempt to uncover the representation of socio-economic reality underlying

¹ For samples of the fundraising letter genre, see Bhatia 2004: 95-111.

these texts. A combination of close reading and automatic querying on a much smaller corpus than the multi-million institutional reports analyzed in the preceding chapters will provide the necessary toolkit for the study of a few microlinguistic traits, which may prove to be surface markers of a typical underlying construal of reality, apparently circulated by international organizations through their discursive activities. Thus, it will be possible to verify the hypothesis formulated by Rist and the other analysts featuring in his 2002 edited volume (Rist 2002) that the language used by such intergovernmental bodies as the UN and its Agencies, the WTO, the World Bank, etc., is actually the result of a stereotyped and predictable handling of rhetorical devices aiming to establish a hegemonic view on progress.

1.2. Corpus collection

The subcorpus under analysis in this chapter has been selected from the much larger corpus examined in this research. It consists of the *Forewords* to the twelve editions of *The State of Food Insecurity*, published by FAO from 1999 to 2011, the *Messages from the Director-General* prefacing the twelve editions of *The World Health Report* issued by WHO from 1998 to 2010, and the *Forewords* to the nine issues of the *World Trade Report* published by the WTO between 2003 and 2011. This subcorpus, running into 41,238 tokens, falls into three further subcorpora, according to the international organization issuing the texts:

<i>Forewords to SOFIs</i> 1999-2011 (subcorpus I)	<i>Messages</i> introducing <i>WHRs</i> 1998-2010 (subcorpus II)	<i>Forewords to WTOs</i> 2003-2011 (subcorpus III)
13,232 tokens TTR: 42.17	15,257 tokens TTR: 42.62	12,749 tokens TTR: 44.30

Table 1 . The three subcorpora

Temporal coordinates coincide with those already established for the main corpus so as to make research results easily comparable and mutually relevant, as well as for the obvious reason that the corpus under analysis here is actually a part of the larger corpus from which it has been extracted.

2. Agentivity structures, processes and responsibilities

A close reading of *Forewords* and *Messages* reveals a recurrent trait in the tendency to represent development as the inevitable result of economic growth, which is thus envisaged as the necessary and at the same time sufficient condition for what features as the much cherished myth of international cooperation, that is

to say human progress, as detailed by the eight Millennium Development Goals (see Chapter I, § 1.2.2., § 1.3.). Whether this condition is really necessary and, more importantly, whether it is really sufficient, remains open to debate for economists, as well as political and social scientists, but it is quite beyond our point, which consists in a critical discourse analytical study of some selected discursive features. In particular, the analysis will start with an exploration of the linguistic resources deployed for the representation of development. More specifically, attention will be devoted to the ergative structures underlying these texts, (Halliday / Matthiessen 2004: 297), with a view to uncovering the inclination to either attribute or conceal responsibility for the coming about of socio-economic change. The underlying hypothesis is that the ergative form – alongside with the choice of the agentless passive voice (Halliday / Matthiessen 2004: 297) – dominates texts whenever there is need to represent phenomena as self-engendered, thus effacing all trace of agentivity.

2.1. Ergative structures and “semantic prosodies”²

In the transitive model (Halliday / Matthiessen 2004: 282-285) – see Chapter III, § 4.2 – an Actor initiates a Process, thus enacting a “quantum” of change, and in so doing the Actor may impact a Goal, whereas the ergative model only features a Process and a Medium through which the process unfolds, with the possibility to either attribute the process to some Agent, which is external to the Medium-Process pair and represents change as the outcome of some “doing”, or to obliterate all indication of agency by representing change as a “happening”, that is to say as an event or a set of events which have not been initiated by any external force, and which have rather initiated themselves out of an endogenous energy. An example may be quoted from the *Foreword* to the first edition of *SOFI*, where ‘increase’ is used ergatively in example (1) and transitively in example (2):

- (1) Across the rest of the developing world, the number of hungry people actually increased by almost 60 million. (*SOFI* 1999)
- (2) [...] we are expanding our ability to gather, analyse and share knowledge that can guide future initiatives to increase access to food for all. (*SOFI* 1999)

A number of “ergative” / “non-ergative” verb pairs can be traced in the subcorpora, which appear to be the object of strategic choices.

The verbs chosen for analysis on account of their prominence in the subcorpora³ are ‘increase’ and ‘improve’, which offer the double choice of

² For the use of this phrase, see Sinclair 1991.

³ Verb phrases have been studied in this section in all forms except the adjectival use of present and past participles, which has been ignored on account of its inability to impact the transitive and ergative systems.

ergative / non-ergative meanings; the intransitive ‘decline’; the transitive ‘reduce’⁴. Here follows a table showing research results, which have been statistically re-positioned in ‘per thousand’ terms on account of the small size of the three subcorpora:

<i>Forewords to SOFI</i>		<i>Messages (WHR)</i>		<i>Forewords to WTR</i>	
ergative ‘increase*’	0.3779 ‰	ergative ‘increase*’	0.3277 ‰	ergative ‘increase*’	0.0784 ‰
non-ergative ‘increase*’	0.9825 ‰	non-ergative ‘increase*’	0.3933 ‰	non-ergative ‘increase*’	0.0784 ‰
‘decline*’	0.5290 ‰	‘decline*’	0.0655 ‰	‘decline*’	0 ‰
‘reduce*’	2.5695 ‰	‘reduce*’	1.3109 ‰	‘reduce*’	0.4706 ‰
ergative ‘improve*’	0 ‰	ergative ‘improve*’	0.1311 ‰	ergative ‘improve*’	0.0784 ‰
non-ergative ‘improve*’	0.5290 ‰	non-ergative ‘improve*’	1.1142 ‰	non-ergative ‘improve*’	0.3922 ‰

Table 2. Ergative / non-ergative verbs

A glance at the table strikes the analyst with the higher per-thousand values of the non-ergative variant of such verbs as ‘increase’ and ‘improve’ over the ergative variant, while the transitive verb ‘reduce’ reveals the highest frequency. All these verbs have a very positive prosody in the corpus. Indeed, ‘improve’ has positive connotations inscribed in its meaning, whereas ‘increase’ and ‘reduce’ acquire positive connotations when they respectively impact positive conditions, e.g. access to food and productivity, and negative conditions, e.g. food insecurity, price volatility, inequity, death and disease. Through the choice of the non-ergative form these verbs construe beneficial change as having been enacted by the three international organizations authoring the reports.

Interesting findings emerge from an examination of concordances extracted for all these verbs in the three subcorpora:

⁴ Although some of these verbs – ‘decline’ and ergative ‘improve’ – do not occur in all three subcorpora, they have been considered on account of the significance attached to the choice whether to use them or not.

N Concordance

1 the number of hungry people actually **increased** by almost 60 million. The
2 have not been sustained. Hunger has **increased** as the world has grown richer
3 reach the WFS goal, agricultural GDP **increased** at an average annual rate of
4 alarming still, the number has actually **increased** over the most recent five
5 1995– 1997, however, the number has **increased** by over 18 million. We must

Concordance 1. Ergative ‘increase*’ in subcorpus I (full list of concordances)

N Concordance

1 high income countries, life expectancy **increased** by 30 to 40 years in this
2 reduced. Healthy life expectancy would **increase** for all. Smoking and other risks
3 as populations age, chronic diseases **increase**, and new and more expensive
4 vectors. Dependence on chemicals has **increased**, as has awareness of the
5 including Alzheimer’s disease, **increases** with age. The conclusions are

Concordance 2. Ergative ‘increase*’ in subcorpus II (full list of concordances)

N Concordance

1 two decades, the number of PTAs has **increased** more than four-fold, to around

Concordance 3. Ergative ‘increase*’ in subcorpus III (full list of concordances)

N Concordance

1 that can guide future initiatives to **increase** access to food for all. The work
2 that promotes private investment and **increases** farm productivity. We must
3 irrigation and fertilizer, that sustainably **increase** productivity and reduce
4 countries will continue to struggle to **increase** production in line with demand,
5 agriculture and that assist farmers to **increase** the resilience of their food
6 improved nutrition fuels better health, **increases** school attendance, reduces
7 risky survival strategies, and greatly **increase** the risk of infection and death
8 initiatives to stimulate food production, **increase** employability and reduce
9 to food with development initiatives to **increase** employment, incomes and food
10 story on the research efforts that vastly **increased** cassava production in Ghana

Concordance 4. Non-ergative ‘increase*’ in subcorpus I (ten random concordances)

N Concordance

1 on the market forces which have **increased** productivity in many sectors of
2 to legitimate expectations; • **increase** efficiency; • protect individuals,
3 as well as males have opportunities to **increase** their educational attainment. •
4 better policies and practices could **increase** the impact of expenditures,
5 to high-quality, affordable care further **increases** the political pressure to make

Concordance 5. Non-ergative ‘increase*’ in subcorpus II (full list of concordances)

N Concordance

- 1 of this nature reduce economic welfare, **increase** trade tensions and can provoke
- 2 of globalization is precisely that it **increases** uncertainty in the job market.
- 3 Perhaps one of the factors that has **increased** reservations about the

Concordance 6. Non-ergative ‘increase*’ in subcorpus III (full list of concordances)

The ergative variant of ‘increase’ is preferred whenever setbacks are reported:

- (3) Across the rest of the developing world, the number of hungry people actually increased by almost 60 million. (*SOFI* 1999)
- (4) Dependence on chemicals has increased, as has awareness of the potential hazards for health and the environment. (*WHR* 2007)
- (5) In the last two decades, the number of PTAs has increased more than four-fold, to around 300 active agreements today. (*WTR* 2011)

However, non-ergative uses of ‘increase’ are predominant as they tend to be associated with the narration of progress on the way to a hunger-free world or with other image-building facts and events:

- (6) With the establishment of the Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information and Mapping Systems (FIVIMS) initiative, we are expanding our ability to gather, analyse and share knowledge that can guide future initiatives to increase access to food for all. (*SOFI* 1999)
- (7) Reform today, in much of the world, will take place in a context of increased reliance on the market forces which have increased productivity in many sectors of the world economy. (*WHR* 1999)

In the non-ergative use of the verb ‘increase’, the subject of traditional grammar functions as Agent within a clause which can be either in the active or in the passive voice, as in the following example:

- (8) Despite the difficult global economic conditions, support to agriculture should not be reduced; indeed, it must be increased. (*SOFI* 2009)

Here the Agent is not mentioned, and although the choice of the non-ergative form implicitly avows the existence of some agency, its absence from the explicit propositional content of the clause somehow obscures its prominence. The association in this excerpt of the agentless passive with strong deontic modalisation suggests the adoption of an ambiguous stance, one in which the prescription of necessary action in the battle against food insecurity is not matched by a frank indication of who should take such action.

Non-ergative uses of the verb ‘increase’ are sometimes associated with menacing events, but then the subject regularly refers to a non-personal fact or

phenomenon, as shown by example (9), or to attitudes and policies which are implicitly stigmatized as “backward”, as in example (11):

- (9) Hunger and malnutrition increase both the incidence and the fatality rate of conditions that cause a majority of maternal deaths during pregnancy and childbirth. (*SOFI* 2005)
- (10) Beggar-thy-neighbour policies of this nature reduce economic welfare, increase trade tensions and can provoke retaliation. (*WTR* 2010)

A similar handling of voice can be traced with non-ergative ‘improve’ and ‘reduce’. Concordances have been extracted for the two verbs and their ergative counterparts, e.g. ergative ‘improve’ and ‘decline’ in all three subcorpora⁵:

N Concordance

- 1 in the developing world continues to decline.
- 2 number of chronically hungry people declined by over 80 million between
- 3 people in the developing world has declined by only 9 million since the WFS
- 4 years, resources for these sectors have declined by more than 50 percent.
- 5 people in the developing countries has declined by a meagre 3 million – a
- 6 prevalence of hunger in this region will decline by 2015 but that the number of
- 7 undernourished people may continue to decline ... but only slowly and only in

Concordance 7. ‘decline*’ in subcorpus I (full list of concordances)

N Concordance

- 1 a woman will bear over her lifetime – declined from over six in the late 1950s

Concordance 8. ‘decline*’ in subcorpus II (full list of concordances)

N Concordance

- 1 400 million by 2015, as well as to reduce by half or more the number of 34
- 2 is a beginning. Our stated goal is to reduce that number, at the minimum, to
- 3 the most vulnerable, and measures to reduce food price volatility need to be an
- 4 through education and policies, and reduce food losses in developing
- 5 increases farm productivity. We must reduce food waste in developed countries
- 6 sustainably increase productivity and reduce production risk must be delivered
- 7 other countries, but can simultaneously reduce food insecurity and domestic
- 8 more predictable policies can not only reduce unwanted side-effects on other
- 9 obstacles in the fight to further reduce hunger. However, a total of 925
- 10 support to agriculture should not be reduced; indeed, it must be increased. A

⁵ No occurrence of ‘decline*’ was found in subcorpus III., while no occurrence of ergative ‘improve*’ was traced in subcorpus I.

Concordance 9. 'reduce*' in subcorpus I (ten random concordances)

N Concordance

1 of our work is to improve people's lives, **reduce** the burdens of disease and
2 we do. Our first priority must be to **reduce** – then eliminate – the debilitating
3 that can: • improve health status; • **reduce** health inequalities; • enhance
4 • First and foremost, there is a need to **reduce** greatly the burden of excess
5 of the poor can enhance growth and **reduce** poverty. Leadership must
6 heart disease have been dramatically **reduced** in many countries which are
7 spread of diseases. They also aim to **reduce** the international impact of public
8 harness the forces of globalization to **reduce** inequity, to diminish hunger and
9 of smallpox from the planet and have **reduced** the risk to individuals and whole
10 which spread financial risk and **reduce** the spectre of catastrophic health

Concordance 10. 'reduce*' in subcorpus II (ten random concordances)

N Concordance

1 policies of this nature **reduce** economic welfare, increase trade
2 price hikes often exacerbate rather than **reduce** volatility. The characteristics of
3 measures also carry costs that may **reduce** economic welfare. Flexibility is
4 a range of measures at their disposal to **reduce** the negative effects on
5 them in a constructive manner will **reduce** the opportunities for governments
6 with preference schemes that **reduce** their attractiveness. Utilization

Concordance 11. 'reduce*' in subcorpus III (full list of concordances)

N Concordance

1 For while health globally has steadily **improved** over the years, great numbers

Concordance 12. Ergative 'improve*' in subcorpus II (full list of concordances)

N Concordance

1 relationship with NGOs has certainly **improved** from where it was, for example,

Concordance 13. Ergative 'improve*' in subcorpus III (full list of concordances)

N Concordance

- 1 specific policies to reduce poverty and improve nutrition levels.
- 2 This should improve food supplies and lower prices in
- 3 programmes must be created or improved to reach those most in need.
- 4 a number of things that we can do to improve the way we handle protracted
- 5 regional and international levels to improve food security in protracted
- 6 and why they have not been able to improve their situations.
- 7 new investments are fundamental to improve the trend.

Concordance 14. Non-ergative ‘improve*’ in subcorpus I (full list of concordances)

N Concordance

- 1 others. The purpose of our work is to improve people’s lives, reduce the
- 2 challenges to be addressed in order to improve the world’s health. • First and
- 3 care, look first for opportunities to improve efficiency. All health systems,
- 4 sustain the health workforce that would improve people’s chances of survival and
- 5 its main objective. Effective action to improve population health is possible in
- 6 performance and the actions that can improve it. For WHO, The world health
- 7 arrangements they have constructed to improve health. It invites reflection on the
- 8 to work on how to assess and improve health systems. Performance
- 9 reducing inequalities, in ways that improve the situation of the worst-off. In
- 10 Clearly, their defining purpose is to improve and protect health – but they

Concordance 15. Non-ergative ‘improve*’ in subcorpus II (ten random concordances)

N Concordance

- 1 technological developments that improve resource management. It can
- 2 ways to lower trade costs and to improve the rules governing multilateral
- 3 years, and Members are still working to improve them further. A major challenge
- 4 not just to the system, but also to improve the system. A desire to adapt
- 5 to new circumstances. Much can be improved and much remains to be done.

Concordance 16. Non-ergative ‘improve*’ in subcorpus III (full list of concordances)

The concordance lines presented above show considerable variation in the use of the verbs analyzed. However, it is possible to identify some recurrent patterns. For instance, goals to be achieved are introduced by the transitive ‘reduce’ – mostly in the active voice – to emphasize commitment in the effort to achieve envisioned image-building results:

- (11) Better and more predictable policies can not only reduce unwanted side-effects on other countries, but can simultaneously reduce food insecurity and domestic price volatility at home. (*SOFI* 2011)
- (12) On the contrary, we can harness the forces of globalization to reduce inequity, to diminish hunger and to improve health in a more just and inclusive global society. (*WHR* 2002)

- (13) An important point to bear in mind is that while we can comfortably argue that contingency measures and the flexibility they bring are good for sustaining effective agreements, these measures also carry costs that may reduce economic welfare. (*WTR* 2009)

Very often the evils in need to be “reduced” are included in the organization’s agenda and are typically associated with what the organization “can” or “may” do in future, therefore typically occurring in modalized utterances. A common feature of these texts appears to be the thinness of the line separating the reporting of results and the presentation of prospective success: whenever achievements are unsatisfactory, they are aptly transferred from the temporal dimension of the present to that of the future, and from unmodalized certainty to epistemic doubt or to the deontic featuring of goals for future action.

The same applies to the handling of non-ergative ‘improve’, which serves purposes of image-building thanks to its typical collocation, i. e. followed by positively connoted concepts, such as food security and resource management:

- (14) We hope that this report will shape the response by decision-makers at local, national, regional and international levels to improve food security in protracted crises (*SOFI* 2010)
- (15) The purpose of our work is to improve people’s lives, reduce the burdens of disease and poverty, and provide access to responsive health care for all. (*WHR* 1999)
- (16) Trade can support technological developments that improve resource management. (*WTR* 2010)

It may well be hypothesized that the reason why the intransitive use of the verb ‘improve’ is almost totally absent from the three subcorpora is that the positive connotations of this verb induce the authors to indicate agents through the adoption of the non-ergative form, which inherently allocates responsibilities and merits. As a matter of fact, an empirical study of all verb phrases in these texts shows a clear preference for the transitive variant, especially in the active voice, whenever some success is being reported.

Conversely, failure may be hypothesized to be associated with silence on its “agents” through the choice of the ergative form for such verbs as intransitive ‘improve’ and ‘decline’, or through the agentless passive, which shows a tendency to being adopted when necessary action is prescribed, with no indication of who exactly should take it. The intransitive ‘decline’ is preferred to non-ergative ‘reduce’ when setbacks in the struggle against hunger, ill health and commercial isolation are reported, so that international organizations never feature as the agents of failure:

- (17) Over the past 20 years, resources for these sectors have declined by more than 50 percent. (*SOFI* 2005)

- (18) In many developing countries, for example, the total fertility rate – the expected number of children a woman will bear over her lifetime – declined from over six in the late 1950s to about three at present. (*WHR* 1999)

The occurrence of ‘decline’ quoted is in a sentence which narrates a 50% fall in the total fertility rate in developing countries since the 1950s. This is generally considered to be a positive result in the battle against extreme poverty in depressed regions, yet the desirability of a fall in the fertility rate may be felt to be a controversial question, and is consequently entrusted with a verb in the ergative form.

2.2. Voice and the representation / obliteration of agency

A close reading of texts in the subcorpora aimed at identifying passive forms, combined with automatic queries on the use of the auxiliary ‘be’ in the passive voice, seems to confirm the hypothesis that the agentless passive is adopted whenever failure in the achievement of institutional aims is reported. Indeed, examples of this form abound in utterances which appear to deliberately efface agency. In subcorpus I (FAO) there is a frequency percentage of the passivizing auxiliary ‘be’ amounting to 0.38%, of which 0.12% are agentless passive clauses. In subcorpus II (WHO) the use of the agentless passive shows a frequency amounting to 0.07% against a 0.21% frequency of the preposition ‘by’ introducing agents, while in subcorpus III (WTO) the passivizing auxiliary ‘be’ within agentless passive clauses has a frequency of 0.18%, while the preposition ‘by’ introducing agents reveals a frequency percentage amounting to 23%. Here follows a comparative table showing frequency percentages for the preposition ‘by’ introducing agents and for the passivizing auxiliary ‘be’ within agentless passive clauses:

Subcorpus I (FAO)		Subcorpus II (WHO)		Subcorpus III (WTO)	
‘by’ (agents)	0.26%	‘by’ (agents)	0.21%	‘by’ (agents)	0.23%
agentless passive auxiliary	0.12%	agentless passive auxiliary	0.07%	agentless passive auxiliary	0.18%

Table 3. Agency in the passive voice

Here follow a few excerpts in which the choice of the passive voice is not accompanied by an indication of agents:

- (19) [...] they do not have enough to eat – many of them may even die because they have been denied the basic human right to food. (*SOFI* 1999)

- (20) Except when war or a natural calamity briefly focuses global attention and compassion, little is said and less is done to put an end to the suffering of a “continent of the hungry” [...] (*SOFI* 2003)
- (21) [...] unless conditions conducive to chronic hunger are eliminated, the two extremes will continue to coexist in the future. (*SOFI* 2006)

These examples support the hypothesis made above, which links the effacement of agency to the representation of failure. The obliteration of agency makes it possible to omit all indication of agents denying “the basic human right to food”, or saying little and doing less “to put an end to the suffering” of the hungry. Silence also falls on those agents who should eliminate “conditions conducive to chronic hunger” and design national food safety-net programmes.

A similar strategy in the handling of agentivity can be traced in subcorpora II and III:

- (22) These tasks include: [...] helping to provide a voice for those whose health is neglected within their own country [...] (*WHR* 1999)
- (23) The responsibility of WHO and its partners in this effort is to ensure that the increased funding is used in such a way as to enable countries to fight HIV/AIDS and at the same time strengthen their health systems. (*WHR* 2004)
- (24) Seventy million mothers and their newborn babies, as well as countless children, are excluded from the health care to which they are entitled. (*WHR* 2005)
- (25) We have known since the days of Ricardo that the gains from trade are not evenly distributed – some win and others lose. (*WTR* 2008)
- (26) The rate at which natural resources are extracted or exploited is crucial. (*WTR* 2010)

There is no indication of who neglects people’s health within their own country, of who should use increased funding to strengthen health systems and who excludes so many million mothers and newborn babies from health care. Similarly, narratives of uneven distribution of gains from trade and of resource exploitation regularly omit the naming of agents, and when agents are mentioned, they never identify individuals or socio-political groups. Rather, they vaguely refer to non-personal entities, such as circumstances or regulations, or they very generally mention “countries” and “governments”, without specifying which countries and which governments.

A close reading of subcorpora and an examination of concordances appear therefore to have verified the hypothesis that the presentation of socio-economic phenomena tends to take place in the absence of a systematic search for the agents of change, thus leaving ontogenetic processes unexplored. This silence on agency whenever phenomena may discredit international organizations by casting the shadow of ineffectiveness over their activities seems to serve the purpose of

effacing all hint at human responsibility in the representation of setbacks or failure in the achievement of institutional aims. In other words, *The State of Food Insecurity*, *The World Health Report* and *The World Trade Reports* tend to represent the organizations' inability to successfully pursue their mandate as a consequence of overwhelming socio-economic phenomena which escape all human control and which it is consequently impossible to ascribe to any form of human responsibility.

Further evidence of this can be found in the patterning of by + agent occurrences in the text. To this purpose, concordances have been extracted for the preposition 'by' with a view to ascertaining the role of agency when some agent is mentioned. For this purpose the use of 'by' in prepositional phrases indicating agents has been isolated from other uses. In most cases agents, emphasized by the adoption of the passive voice, are non-personal entities such as health- and life-threatening conditions or disastrous economic conditions:

- (27) Every child whose physical and mental development is stunted by hunger and malnutrition stands to lose 5 to 10 percent in lifetime earnings. (*SOFI* 2004)
- (28) Dollar for dollar spent on health, many countries are falling short of their performance potential. The result is a large number of preventable deaths and lives stunted by disability. (*WHR* 2000)
- (29) Finally, we know from experience that resorting to contingency protection is influenced by external circumstances and "atmospherics". (*WTO* 2009)
- (30) Most externalities associated with natural resources tend to be negative, such as the environmental damage caused by burning fossil fuels. (*WTO* 2010)

In the latter excerpt environmental damage is represented as caused by an apparently endogenous phenomenon – the burning of fossil fuels – whose perpetrators are rigorously ignored.

An occasional indication of personal agents within passive clauses is traceable in some of the texts, when action is narrated which is in favour of the "cause". The obvious reason for this syntactical choice is that the emphatic indication of agents clearly attributes merits to the makers of beneficial change:

- (31) If global food security is to be achieved and sustained as soon as possible, the twin-track approach supported by FAO, WFP, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and their development partners will be crucial. (*SOFI* 2009)
- (32) [...] there are many more or less far-reaching ways in which the issue in question might be covered by WTO rules. (*WTO* 2007)

In some cases the preposition 'by' introduces the identity of those groups who are worst hit by adverse conditions:

(33) This crushing economic burden is borne by those who can afford it least, by people struggling to eke out a living on less than a dollar a day, by countries whose economies and development efforts are slowed or stalled by lack of productivity and resources. (*SOFI* 2004)

(34) The impact of this failure is born disproportionately by the poor. (*WHR* 2000)

The role of grammatical agents is carried by the people affected by adverse economic conditions, though in fact those people suffer the effects of the crisis and cannot be held responsible for their cruel destiny. The real agents of their suffering, if there be any, are not mentioned, and when the second relative clause detects the causes for the slowing down of economies in the lack of productivity and resources, the agents of that slowing down are non-personal entities. Similarly, in the following excerpt the agents fuelling urban poverty are rural people migrating towards the cities:

(35) In turn, urban poverty tends to be fuelled by people migrating towards the cities in an attempt to escape the deprivations associated with rural livelihoods. (*SOFI* 2006)

The victims of food deprivation are thus represented as the cause and origin of their own condition.

What can be inferred from both a close reading and an automated investigation of the subcorpora is the consistent choice to ignore agents whenever the representation of agency would allocate responsibility for failure.

Thus my hypothesis that the ergative form and the agentless passive dominate texts when phenomena are more conveniently represented as self-engendered, appears to be confirmed. Any reputation-menacing attribution of responsibilities is in actual fact regularly avoided, in an attempt to avert all possible controversy over who should be held responsible for the great evils afflicting mankind. Consequently, no delving into the causes of socio-economic phenomena takes place, and only an indication of non-personal agents occasionally appears when failure in the achievement of institutional aims is reported.

3. Outcomes, futurables and the role of institutions

The analysis of the ergative model and of the representation of agency conducted in the previous section has shown that recognizable patterns exist in the discourse of international organizations. In this section attention is devoted to potential areas of divergence in the handling of a few strategic lexical choices, which may reveal interesting peculiarities in the construction of socio-economic reality and in the representation of each organization's core values and mission. As "local meanings" (Dijk van 1998; 2000) are encapsulated in the micro-linguistic level of textualization, an examination of keywords and typical collocations may shed

precious light on the strategies of self-representation deployed by international organizations.

N	Key word	Freq.	%	RC. Freq.	RC. %	Keyness
1	FOOD	199	1.4754	5	0.0177	407.95
2	HUNGER	152	1.1269	1		332.88
3	HUNGRY	56	0.4152	0		126.52
5	PEOPLE	106	0.7859	50	0.1773	82.925
6	FAO	33	0.2447	0		74.52
7	SUMMIT	36	0.2669	2		67.19
8	RURAL	29	0.15	0		65.482
9	UNDERNOURISHED	27	0.2002	0		60.963
10	WFS	26	0.1928	0		58.704
11	PRICES	41	0.304	7	0.0248	58.183
12	MILLION	60	0.4448	22	0.078	57.343
13	INSECURITY	24	0.1779	0		54.186
14	AGRICULTURE	34	0.2521	5	0.0177	50.811
15	PERCENT	22	0.1631	0		49.668
16	NUMBER	54	0.4004	22	0.078	47.695
17	AGRICULTURAL	21	0.1557	0		47.409
18	PROTRACTED	16	0.1186	0		36.117
19	REDUCTION	29	0.215	7	0.0248	35.479
20	SECURITY	30	0.2224	9	0.0319	32.631
21	CRISIS	26	0.1928	6	0.0213	32.503
22	MDG	14	0.1038	0		31.601
23	TARGET	19	0.1409	2		31.246
24	DEVELOPING	56	0.4152	37	0.1312	30.355
25	TERM	27	0.2002	8	0.0284	29.581
26	STATE	18	0.1335	2		29.193
27	GOAL	27	0.2002	9	0.0319	27.502
28	MUST	43	0.3188	25	0.0887	27.182
29	JACQUES	12	0.089	0		27.086
30	DIOUF	12	0.089	0		27.086
31	PRODUCTIVITY	16	0.1186	2		25.122
32	TRACK	14	0.1038	1		25.035
33	NETS	11	0.0816	0		24.828
34	I	4	0.0297	57	0.2022	-24.09
35	A	161	1.1937	532	1.8869	-28.42
36	POLICY	5	0.0371	86	0.305	-39.86
37	HEALTH	10	0.0741	351	1.2449	-206.8

Table 5. Keyness in subcorpus I

N	Key word	Freq.	%	RC. Freq.	RC. %	Keyness
1	HEALTH	347	2.2546	14	0.0533	590.64
2	SYSTEMS	60	0.3898	8	0.0304	77.793
3	OUR	92	0.5978	33	0.1255	69.65
4	CARE	47	0.3054	4	0.0152	69.378

5	TOBACCO	29	0.1884	0		57.819
6	WHO	71	0.4613	24	0.0913	56.337
7	DISEASES	33	0.2144	2		52.308
8	DISEASE	31	0.2014	2		48.56
9	CONTROL	24	0.1559	0		47.845
10	ORGANIZATION	23	0.1494	0		45.851
11	CENTURY	28	0.1819	3	0.0114	38.873
12	MALARIA	30	0.1949	4	0.0152	38.865
13	ALL	78	0.5068	50	0.1902	30.332
14	MENTAL	22	0.1429	3	0.0114	28.272
15	LEADERSHIP	14	0.091	0		27.904
16	PARTNERSHIPS	13	0.0845	0		25.91
17	LIFE	26	0.1689	7	0.0266	24.173
18	NUMBER	9	0.0585	67	0.2548	-24.43
19	DEVELOPING	13	0.0845	80	0.3043	-24.43
20	FOOD	5	0.0325	199	0.7569	-146.9
21	TRADE	5	0.0325	207	0.7873	-154

Table 6. Keyness in subcorpus II

N	Key word	Freq.	%	RC. Freq.	RC. %	Keyness
1	TRADE	205	1.6012	7	0.0242	429.8
2	WTO	70	0.5467	2		148.7
3	POLICY	73	0.5702	18	0.0623	95.261
4	TRADING	36	0.2812	0		85.058
5	AGREEMENTS	23	0.1796	0		54.327
6	MULTILATERAL	24	0.1875	1		49.025
7	DOHA	20	0.1562	0		47.237
8	PTAS	19	0.1484	0		44.874
9	GATT	18	0.1406	0		42.512
10	COOPERATION	27	0.2109	5	0.0173	39.706
11	MARKET	30	0.2343	8	0.0277	37.619
12	GOVERNMENTS	64	0.4999	44	0.1524	37.495
13	NEGOTIATIONS	18	0.1406	1		35.409
14	RULES	21	0.164	3	0.0104	33.714
15	AGREEMENT	14	0.1093	0		33.062
16	COHERENCE	14	0.1093	0		33.062
17	LIBERALIZATION	14	0.1093	0		33.062
18	NATURAL	32	0.2499	13	0.045	31.019
19	ANALYSIS	24	0.1875	7	0.0242	28.702
20	ISSUES	31	0.2421	14	0.0485	27.693
21	RELATIONS	16	0.125	2		26.695
22	DEVELOPMENTS	11	0.0859	0		25.975
23	SYSTEM	31	0.2421	16	0.0554	24.674
24	NON	15	0.1172	2		24.575
25	MEMBERS	13	0.1015	1		24.228
26	SUBSIDIES	13	0.1015	1		24.228
27	WORLD	41	0.3202	216	0.7479	-29.89
28	OUR	7	0.0547	118	0.4086	-49.28

30	HEALTH	4	0.0312	357	1.2362	-228.8
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Table 7. Keyness in subcorpus III

3.1. Development

A first glance at keywords reveals some peculiarities in the handling of the concept of development featuring in the letter-like introductions to the periodical reports published by FAO, WHO and the WTO. In particular, the present participle ‘developing’ shows positive keyness (30.355) in subcorpus I (FAO) and negative keyness (-24.43) in subcorpus II (WHO), whereas the de-verbal noun ‘developments’ carries a positive keyness value (25.975) in subcorpus III (WTO). Thus, reference to developing countries appears to be crucial in the texts introducing FAO’s reports, while ‘developments’ play a significant role in the prefaces signed by the WTO’s Director-General.

The extraction of frequency lists and concordances from the three subcorpora adds interesting details on the use of the lexical item ‘develop*’. The verb never occurs in subcorpus I (FAO), which is, however, rich in occurrences of the noun ‘development*’ and of the present and past participles ‘developing’ and ‘developed’, which feature as adjectives categorizing countries on the basis of the degree of socio-economic development they enjoy. The verb ‘develop*’ has a frequency percentage amounting to 0.05% in subcorpus II (WHO), where it only occurs in its ergative variant, whereas in subcorpus III (WTO) the same verb reveals a frequency of 0.03% in its ergative use and of 0.01% in its non-ergative meaning. Here follows a table with the frequency percentages of the noun and adjectival participles in the three subcorpora:

Subcorpus I (FAO)		Subcorpus II (WHO)		Subcorpus III (WTO)	
development*	0.37%	development*	0.31%	development*	0.28%
developing	0.42%	developing	0.08%	developing	0.19%
developed	0.08%	developed	0.03%	developed	0.05%

Table 4. ‘Develop*’ in the three subcorpora

3.2. ‘Must’

Another interesting finding emerging from an analysis of keyword lists is the positive keyness for the modal operator ‘must’ in the *Forewords to SOFIs* (27.182). Thus the pervasive adoption of the strong deontic modal ‘must’, with its emotional appeal to pathos, appears to characterize the discourse of the Food and Agriculture Organization. The extraction of concordances shows the frequent co-

occurrence of this modal operator with the first-person plural inclusive pronoun ‘we’, which appears to confirm the impression of a strenuous rhetorical attempt to engage the readership in the “cause”, that is to say in the common effort to pursue the organization’s mandate:

N Concordance

1 transfers to school lunch programmes – **must** be in place to protect the most
2 and their development partners **must** target the people who are suffering
3 of more than 800 million people? We **must** work together, and quickly. I am
4 to protect the most vulnerable. • We **must** orient agricultural research towards
5 and improve nutrition levels. • We **must** set priorities. Countries and their
6 resolution and peacekeeping activities **must** be seen as vital tools in fighting
7 offer possible solutions to hunger: • We **must** address conflict, the cause of the
8 economies must be rebuilt. • We **must** make the investment needed to
9 is achieved, war-shattered economies **must** be rebuilt. • We must make the
10 the top-down methods of the past **must** be renounced and, instead, local

Concordance 17. ‘Must’ in subcorpus I (firsts ten concordances)

Out of 43 occurrences of ‘must’, 20 are introduced by the first person plural pronoun – mostly functioning as inclusive ‘we’ – performing the role of grammatical subject. This finding indicates a strongly commissive element in the discourse of the Food and Agriculture Organization. By pledging to do all that is reasonably feasible to achieve institutional goals and by raising a sense of commitment in the readers through their inclusion in the community of global stakeholders challenged to join in the struggle for development, FAO shifts the focus from the description of problems and the narration of setbacks to the instructive promise that the International Community will take action with a view to turning present failure into future success.

3.3. Self-representation

Decidedly higher is the keyness value (69.65) of the possessive adjective ‘our’ in subcorpus II (WHO). A negative keyness value (-49.28) is displayed by the same possessive in subcorpus III (WTO). Here again the extraction of concordances proves extremely useful with a view to ascertaining whether ‘our’ in the *Messages* introducing *WHRs* is of the inclusive or exclusive kind.

N Concordance

1 should be defined in order to extend our field of concern beyond the provision
2 refinement and development. To date, our knowledge about health systems has
3 world is the raison d'être of this report. Our challenge is to gain a better
4 of WHO. I also took the view that while our work in this area must be consistent
5 with the values of health for all, our recommendations should be based
6 year, our Member States have taken our struggle forward by focusing on
7 psychological and social factors. Our understanding of the relationship
8 fear associated with mental illnesses. Our report is a comprehensive review of
9 a mental illness or brain disorder from our communities – there is room for
10 be universally regarded in a new light. Our call has been joined by the United

Concordance 18. 'Our' in subcorpus II (first ten concordances)

Out of 92 occurrences of 'our', 76 are reader-exclusive, 13 are reader-inclusive, and three are ambiguous, which emphasizes the attempt of the World Health Organization – here embodied by its Director-General – to enact a process of self-representation featuring WHO as an institution with a strong “corporate” image, whose noble intent justifies its very existence and calls for applause and active engagement on the part of global stakeholders. Thus the knowledge which WHO has gathered about health systems through its research activities is “our knowledge”, “our member states have taken our struggle forward”, “Our call has been joined by the United Nations”: the World Health Organization stands up for a highly humanitarian cause – health for all – which inherently elicits goodwill from the international community, occasionally envisaged as a collaborative stakeholder through the adoption of the inclusive possessive adjective (“our communities”). It is rather surprising that the interpersonal metafunction, though playing a central role in these letter-like prefaces to institutional reports, never avails itself of the second-person possessive adjective and personal pronoun, with one single exception in subcorpus II (WHO). The reason may reside in the commissive and self-directive – rather than reader-directive – nature of these texts, which adopt face-saving strategies aiming to raise awareness and elicit willing collaboration on the part of the audience. At all events, the reader's presence is indirectly conjured up by the lavish use of the first-person singular adjectival and pronominal forms, which abound in the *Messages* introducing *WHRs* (0.33%), but are also frequent in the *Forewords* to *WTRs* (0.20%), while *Forewords* to *SOFIs* only reveal a limited frequency of these forms (0.03%).

3.4. Policy

Further revealing differences emerge from a study of a few lexical choices highlighted through the extraction of keyword lists. In the first place, the word

‘policy’ enjoys absolute prominence in the *Forewords to WTRs* as it is charged with a very high keyness value (95.261). If this value is examined in connection with the positive keyness carried by the word ‘governments’ in the same subcorpus (37.495), a well-defined attitude towards political institutions appears to surface in the texts authored by the WTO’s Director-General, namely one which attributes an active role to national governments and their ability to develop policies, presumably in accordance with the WTO’s institutional aims. Another noun shows positive keyness in the *Forewords* authored by the WTO’s Director-General (39.706): the abstract noun ‘cooperation’. This is a rather surprising finding if one considers that cooperation is one of the core values of the United Nations and its Agencies. An international organization like the WTO, which pursues the institutional mandate of “open[ing] trade for the benefit of all”⁶ and in its mission statement only hints at some vaguely humanitarian cause in the alleged objective of benefiting all, discursively sets cooperation among its objectives more prominently than UN Agencies do. Concordances have been extracted from subcorpus III (WTO) aiming to ascertain the use of these three nouns by retrieving the cotext in which they occur.

N Concordance

- 1 the necessary infrastructure and policy climate to facilitate South-South
- 2 on new opportunities generated by policy change in both developed and
- 3 public understanding of pressing policy issues. The WTR does not
- 4 of the options available to address policy challenges. Following a report on
- 5 instability can frustrate trade policy goals. The limited and ultimately
- 6 on macroeconomic policy and trade policy shows how closely linked these
- 7 pro-growth and prodevelopment policy framework. The analysis of
- 8 for reducing uncertainty in trade policy, lowering transactions costs, and
- 9 international cooperation in supporting policy coherence. International
- 10 environment in a range of related policy areas. Policies affecting

Concordance 19. ‘Policy’ in subcorpus III (first ten concordances)

⁶ From the *Mission Statement*, available at http://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/whatis_e/wto_dg_stat_e.htm (see chapter I § 1.3. p.11).

N Concordance

1 nations. Given this unity of purpose, **governments** need to do more to ensure
2 things and dent credibility. Second, as **governments** formulate their positions in
3 subject to continuing debate among **governments** and their constituencies.
4 of conclusions about the options facing **governments**. In the case of South-South
5 relationships. Once again, it falls to **governments** to address these
6 market structures explains why **governments** have a responsibility to
7 of trade, is beyond dispute. What **governments** do about infrastructure is a
8 illustrate the nature of choices faced by **governments** as they seek to fashion a
9 in a mutually beneficial manner. I urge **governments** to press ahead with this
10 of the WTO, however, requires that **governments** continue to show

Concordance 20. ‘Governments’ in subcorpus III (first ten concordances)

Governments “need to do more”, they “formulate their position”, they “have a responsibility”, they “do [something] about infrastructure”: they mostly perform the grammatical function of subjects to action which they are either taking already or are urged to take in the near future. Thus they are envisioned as the actors of change, that change which is adumbrated by the lavish use of the noun ‘policy’, often placed in pre-modifying position: “infrastructure ad policy climate”, “policy change”, “pressing policy issues”, “policy challenges”, “trade policy goals”, “pro-growth and prodevelopment policy framework”, “policy coherence”, “policy areas”. In some other noun phrases ‘policy’ acts as head, notably in the recurrent phrase “trade policy”, which – like all phrases including the type ‘policy’ –mostly features as object or complement, rarely as subject. Thus governments and policies can be said to represent the originators and the product of change respectively, although the two nouns never co-occur. Agents in utterances with ‘policy’ performing the role of goal tend to be impersonal entities, usually abstractions (“instability”, “international cooperation”). “Policy change” once features as the agent generating new opportunities “in both developed and developing countries”. The concept of policy therefore oscillates between the notion of a definite course of action, whose source and origin remain rather indefinite but seem to imply an active role on the part of political institutions, and the notion of a vaguely outlined though potent factor of progress.

As regards the cotext in which the type ‘cooperation’ occurs, here follow concordance lines showing its collocation:

N Concordance

1 intent lurking behind regulatory cooperation in PTAs. But we should be
2 strengthens the need for international cooperation. The production and
3 for economies and for international cooperation of the choices made. We do
4 challenges. Effective international cooperation and open markets are as
5 current arrangements for international cooperation, and the Report highlights a
6 capacity to benefit from international cooperation. This does not suggest that
7 done in the framework of international cooperation, including through the WTO,
8 in fostering dialogue that can bolster cooperation? In sum, I hope that this
9 in our ability to solidify international cooperation in this field. As with
10 on the advantages of international cooperation on the issue concerned. The

Concordance 21. ‘Cooperation’ in subcorpus III (first ten concordances)

‘Cooperation’ almost invariably collocates with the pre-modifier “international”. Like the noun ‘policy’, it mostly occurs in object or complement position, though it features once as the subject of the copular verb ‘be’.

It is interesting to observe that while the frequency values for the type ‘cooperation’ in subcorpus III (WTO) and in the other two subcorpora differ by almost two percentage points, another abstract noun defining a similar attitude in the handling of the challenges facing the international community, namely ‘participation’, enjoys equal prominence in all three subcorpora (0.02%) and consequently appears in none of the keyword lists.

4. The futurability of development and the promotion of self

The analysis of microlinguistic features such as lexical items and collocational choices has shown a tendency in the letter-like prefaces to institutional reports to represent progress and change as the ultimate objective of all activities implemented by international organizations. The types ‘develop*’ and ‘participation’ appear to be dense with significance in all three subcorpora, while the “local meanings” encapsulated in such items as ‘cooperation’, ‘policy’, ‘governments’, the deontic modal operator ‘must’ and the first-person plural possessive adjective ‘our’ differ from subcorpus to subcorpus. The aim the three organizations authoring these texts appear to share is the effort to build a public diplomacy campaign in the face of the International Community pivoting on the essential role of their contribution to developing strategies for progress on a global scale. In this campaign for what Bhatia terms “the promotion of self” (Bhatia 1993), setbacks and failure in the achievement of institutional aims are represented as challenges facing the international community and legitimizing international organizations in their existence on account of the role they allegedly play in providing governments with research data and guidance in the difficult task of adopting the right policies. The principle of international cooperation is called upon to make up for any deficiencies in the effort of international

organizations to further development, even though no deficiency is ever acknowledged. Rather, what has not been achieved yet is conveniently represented as what “we” – both referring to the organizations issuing the reports and to mankind at large – must do in future. Thus outcomes of present and past activity – or inactivity – are turned into futurables.

The initial hypothesis was that the *Forewords* and *Messages* introducing institutional reports perform not only informative, but also emotive functions in their attempt to build a convincing image of international organizations by casting a strongly positive light on the report of their activities, one which is dominated by an unshakeable faith in the desirability of development. This hypothesis appears to have been verified by the recourse to automatic querying, which has uncovered a few strategic choices concerning the deep-level syntax – structured by the systems of ergativity and transitivity – and the “local meanings” with which a number of lexical items are charged. The discursive strategies adopted in these texts proclaim them to belong to a newly developing promotional genre, situated on the verge between the CEO’s Letter and the Fundraising Letter, sharing with both a fundamentally persuasive function and aiming to justify and legitimize the very existence of the discourse communities in which they originate.

Research results have also shown that the presentation of setbacks in the achievement of the organizations’ mandate through a systematic recourse to ergative verbs and agentless passives, or through a shift from zero or epistemic modality to deontic modality conveniently modifies a presentation of results into an outline of necessary action to be taken in future. Thus the almighty powers of futurability turn failure into future success, establishing a convenient niche for intergovernmental bodies to occupy and work in: what has not been attained yet in the pursuit of institutional aims legitimizes international organizations to persevere in their activity, or, if no real activity is possible, in their mere existence. An in-depth analysis of the interaction between underlying ergative structures and the handling of modalisation may shed precious light on the interplay between the ideational and the interpersonal dimensions of the meaning-making process in institutional reporting, thus opening up fruitful areas of further research.

Conclusions

This research has examined the institutional discourse generated by three international organizations in their practice of periodical reporting on the challenges they face while pursuing institutional aims and on the projects implemented or planned with a view to dealing with those challenges.

The corpus under analysis consists of the reports published by two UN Agencies, the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Health Organization, and a third intergovernmental body, the World Trade Organization, which share the objective of socio-economic progress within the scope of their mandate and regularly provide updates as to progress and setbacks on the way to enhanced degrees of development around the world. The corpus, which has been collected on a chronological basis, starting from the first days of report writing on institutional activities in the late 1990s in the case of FAO and WHO, and in the early 2000s for the WTO, is divided into three subcorpora according to the issuing authority – the Director-General and the Publishing Division of each organization. The three subcorpora have been kept separate for purposes of comparative analysis, which has been conducive to interesting findings in terms of both synchronic and diachronic study of considerable amounts of rather homogenous – from the point of view of format, participation framework and communicative purpose – and therefore comparable texts.

The approach adopted in the analysis has combined a quantitative scanning of corpora with an indispensable qualitative interpretation of the results obtained through automatic querying. In particular, the study of the textual organization and of the underlying cognitive-rhetorical patterns, as well as an evaluation of communicative purposes, has strongly relied on the close reading of texts, whereas the explorations into some selected micro-linguistic features which either reveal the ideational dimension of the meaning-making process or shed light on what Halliday calls the interpersonal metafunction of language (Halliday / Matthiessen 2004), have been carried out through regular recourse to automatically processed queries on word frequency, keyness and concordancing. Thus the objectivity conferred on the research by the reliance on specially devised software capable of processing huge amounts of text, has been coupled by the necessarily subjective intervention of the analyst, who alone can organize findings with a view to interpreting them. In this way mere data become the basis for an interpretive effort aiming to grasp the full significance of texts.

The qualitative examination of the three subcorpora in search of text types has yielded a variable profile of description, narration and instruction, with occasional touches of exposition and argumentation in the first two subcorpora, i.

e. in the reports drafted by FAO and WHO, whereas subcorpus III (WTO), though basically consisting of descriptive and narrative units, with elements of instruction in the opening and closing sections, more prominently introduces large expository text divisions, while avoiding recourse to explicit argumentation.

The microlinguistic features which have been selected for automated querying are the surface-level markers of the categories of *person* and *modality*, which refer to the interpersonal metafunction, and of the system of transitivity, which ideationally governs the discursive representation of reality. The extraction of frequency lists, keywords and concordances has revealed an attempt on the part of Director-Generals and their writing staff to establish the international organizations they represent as authoritative entities which can be well invested with the task of fighting the great evils afflicting mankind – ranging from food insecurity to disease and commercial isolation.

The use of exclusive ‘we’ is indeed associated with actions taken to eradicate those evils and therefore tends to represent those organizations as the agents of change and the messengers of renewal, while recourse to inclusive ‘we’ typically aims to challenge the readership to join in the struggle in the humanitarian causes embraced by the issuing organizations. A strategic handling of modal operators, with convenient transitions from epistemic to deontic modality, aptly turns unattained goals and setbacks in the achievement of the institutional mandate into challenges for the future. Intergovernmental bodies are thus legitimized as almighty powers which will in good time take the advocated steps on the way to global development, although to date they have proved unable to do so. Thanks to this shift in perspective, which dresses failure in the garments of future success, international organizations are raised to the rank of founding authorities and the discourse they produce to the status of self-constituting discourse (Maingueneau 1995). However, in Maingueneau’s reading of their discursive products, their effort is a vain one, marred as it is by the impotence of a discursive practice which lacks an extra-discursive legitimization (Maingueneau 2002).

As to the system of transitivity which ideationally structures the texts under analysis, the findings of automatic querying show a tendency to represent social reality and failure in the achievement of objectives as a “happening” rather than a “doing”, and to conceal agentivity whenever an acknowledgement of responsibility would be detrimental to the reputation of the issuing organization. The choice of the agentless passive and still more of the ergative form, which totally effaces agency, enables drafters to feature rising poverty, food insecurity, lack of hygiene and socio-economic backwardness as the outcome of inexorable forces, in which human – and therefore also political – intervention is powerless. On the contrary, efforts in the struggle for a better world are regularly highlighted through an accurate indication of agents – international organizations – which are

often emphasized by the adoption of the passive voice explicitly including agency in rhematic position.

Generic analysis has explored the pattern of recurrent rhetorical moves which can be traced in institutional reports and which have proved similar across subcorpora. A study of interdiscursivity in the genre has shown that the institutional report still bears traces of the antecedent genres from which it has evolved, i. e. the company report and the fundraising letter. Hybridizing transitions across diverse discourse areas are prone to shed light on covert communicative purposes. Thus the study of institutional reports from a genre analytical perspective has revealed the co-existence of purposes of self-enactment and self-legitimization along the alleged aims of raising awareness and soliciting commitment.

Further interesting findings have emerged from the study of the contextual variety of English used in institutional reports, which has proved to be very close to a Language for Specific Purposes (Gotti 2003; 2008) and to access rising levels of specialization. This feature of the textualization of institutional reports is matched by another – seemingly opposite – tendency, namely the adoption of popularizing strategies aiming to make these texts accessible to a wider audience than the community of practice generating them. Allegedly, the readership should coincide with mankind at large, and although the impression the analyst gets on reading these texts is one of exclusion of all “outsiders” – including those policy-makers who are envisioned as “ratified addressees” (Goffman 1981) – the reports published by UN Agencies actually strive to involve as many readers as possible through the adoption of popularizing strategies. Differently, the Secretariat of the WTO does not seem to facilitate the reading task for the layman as the variety of English used in its reports appears to belong to the intraspecialistic level of the language of economics.

This specialization of discourse is probably another face of what Fairclough terms the “technologization” of discourse (Fairclough 1995) in institutional settings, which has risen to hegemony in an attempt to bend discursive practices to purposes of social control. Technologization actually takes on the two forms of specialization and conversationalization, which both surface in the reports of international organizations, most notably those published by the United Nations and its Agencies, in an attempt to impress readers with the competence of the authors and the reliability of the data provided, while creating a sense of belonging through the adoption of discursive strategies which “democratically” involve the readership in the making of discourse by enlarging authorship to the point of including the former into the latter, thus enacting that unique form of participation which Maingueneau envisages for community-generated discourse and terms “participation” (Maingueneau 2004).

In conclusion, the institutional reports drafted by international organizations represent a text genre endowed with an integrity of its own, displaying linguistic features which confer a double status on them: that of discursive products generated by a community of practice addressing members of the self same community, and that of internationally generated discourse addressing a global readership, who is invited to share roles with the authorship in an attempt to collaborate in a supreme – discursive – struggle for universal development.

Appendix

FAO's reports

(available at <http://www.fao.org/publications/sofi/en/>):

The state of food insecurity in the world 1999. Food insecurity: when people must live with hunger and fear starvation

The state of food insecurity in the world 2000. Food insecurity: when people live with hunger and fear starvation

The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2001. Food insecurity: when people live with hunger and fear starvation

The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2002. Food insecurity: when people must live with hunger and fear starvation

The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2003. Monitoring progress towards the World Food Summit and Millennium Development Goals

The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2004. Monitoring progress towards the World Food Summit and Millennium Development Goals

The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2005. Eradicating world hunger – key to achieving the Millennium Development Goals

The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2006. Eradicating world hunger – taking stock ten years after the World Food Summit

The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2008. High food prices and food security – threats and opportunities

The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2009. Economic crises – impacts and lessons learned

The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2010. Addressing food insecurity in protracted crises

The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2011. How does international price volatility affect domestic economies and food security?

WHO's reports

(available at <http://www.who.int/whr/en/index.html>):

The World Health Report 1998. Life in the 21st century A vision for all. Report of the Director-General

The World Health Report 1999. Making a Difference

The World Health Report 2000. Health Systems: Improving Performance

The World Health Report 2001. Mental Health: New Understanding, New Hope

The World Health Report 2002. Reducing Risks, Promoting Healthy Life

The World Health Report 2003. Shaping the Future

The World Health Report 2004. Changing history

The World Health Report 2005. Make every mother and child count

The World Health Report 2006. Working together for health

The World Health Report 2007. A safer future: global public health security in the 21st century

The World Health Report 2008. Primary Health Care: Now More Than Ever

The World Health Report 2010. Health Systems financing. The path to universal coverage

WTO's reports

(available at http://www.wto.org/english/res_e/reser_e/wtr_e.htm):

World Trade Report 2003. Trade and development

World Trade Report 2004. Coherence

World Trade Report 2005. Trade, standards and the WTO

World Trade Report 2006. Subsidies, trade and the WTO

World Trade Report 2007. Six decades of multilateral trade cooperation: What have we learnt?

World Trade Report 2008. Trade in a Globalizing World

World Trade Report 2009. Trade Policy Commitments and Contingency Measures

World Trade Report 2010. Trade in Natural Resources

World Trade Report 2011. The WTO and preferential trade agreements: From co-existence to coherence

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