
SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 52nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. PIRSON (Belgium)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative
and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 104: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued)

Access of staff representatives to the Fifth Committee

* This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room A-3550, 866 United Nations Plaza (Alcoa Building), and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate fascicle for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.5/34/SR.63
29 November 1979
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 104: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued)

Access by staff representatives to the Fifth Committee (A/C.5/34/29;
A/C.5/34/CRP.5 and 6)

1. Mr. SADDLER (United States of America) recalled that his delegation had declared its willingness to examine any reasonable proposal put forward by the Secretary-General on access by staff representatives to the Fifth Committee. The Secretary-General had just submitted a note (A/C.5/34/29) in which he had concluded that, on balance, both psychological and practical benefits could be obtained by extending the principle of staff consultation to allow the staff to present their views directly to the Fifth Committee both in writing and orally.
2. The following key features could be noted in the document in question: that the Secretary-General was merely making suggestions, not proposals or recommendations; that it would be left to the Fifth Committee to invite a representative of the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA) or a representative of the United Nations staff; that only one representative of FICSA and one representative of the United Nations staff would be heard by the Fifth Committee and on only two items of the agenda - "Report of the International Civil Service Commission" and "Personnel questions"; that the Fifth Committee would merely hear the views of the representatives and not enter into negotiations with the staff regarding conditions of service or salaries and wages; that the representatives of FICSA and the United Nations staff should be secretariat members; that access to any Fifth Committee working group would require agreement or consensus among the Member States participating in the group; that the Secretary-General would continue to appoint staff under Article 101 of the Charter; that the protections contained in Articles 97 and 100 of the Charter would be maintained; that the representatives of FICSA and the United Nations staff would address the Fifth Committee from the floor and not from the rostrum; and, finally, that access by the staff would be limited to deliberations in the Fifth Committee.
3. Generally speaking, the delegation of the United States had serious reservations to express with regard to the Secretary-General's suggestions for granting direct access by FICSA and the United Nations staff to the Fifth Committee. In particular, it did not believe that the representatives of FICSA and the staff should be invited to reply to questions raised by delegations. It continued to believe that communications should be in two directions: on the one hand, between FICSA and the United Nations staff and the Secretary-General and, on the other, between the Secretary-General and Member States. The best formula would be to authorize the representatives of FICSA and the United Nations staff to present a single statement at the beginning of the debate on the two agenda items referred to.

/...

(Mr. Saddler, United States)

4. The delegation of the United States was willing, albeit reluctantly, to go along with some of the Secretary-General's suggestions on a trial basis on the conditions he had enumerated. In addition, it must clearly be understood that any invitation issued by the Fifth Committee would in no way constitute an "acquired right" for the staff and that the invitation might be withdrawn at subsequent sessions if the Fifth Committee so decided.

5. On those terms, his delegation would not be opposed to a representative of FICSA addressing the Fifth Committee on the report of the International Civil Service Commission or a representative of the United Nations staff addressing the Committee on personnel questions. However, in view of the fact that the thirty-fourth session of the General Assembly was far advanced, any such invitation would have to be considered in the early part of the thirty-fifth session.

6. Mr. SWEGER (Sweden) said that his delegation supported the conclusions and recommendations set out in the note by the Secretary-General. It was right for staff representatives to have an opportunity to address the Fifth Committee when the latter was dealing with conditions of service. In considering personnel questions, the Fifth Committee had been able to see for itself the sensitivity of the issues, and it would have been useful for it to hear the views of the staff before coming to a decision on certain of the questions involved. His delegation would like the Committee to take a decision in line with the recommendations submitted in the note by the Secretary-General, so that staff representatives might make their views known on matters of direct interest to them.

7. Mr. BRODOWINGRAT (Indonesia) said that the three documents submitted to the Committee were not clear or precise enough for delegations to be able to adopt a position on the question of access by staff representatives to the Fifth Committee. The delegation of Indonesia was not totally opposed to authorizing the legitimate representatives of the staff to put forward their views on questions of direct concern to them, but at the same time, it was aware of the inconveniences that might result. In that respect, as had been noted by the Secretary-General, there was a need to establish appropriate modalities which would ensure that the work of the Committee was not adversely affected by misunderstandings or misuse of the terms governing the right of access to the Committee.

8. Unfortunately, the note by the Secretary-General was much too vague regarding the modalities. Thus, paragraph 12 might be construed as meaning that staff representatives would be authorized to take part in the Committee's work on all matters termed "personnel questions". But many such questions were not of direct concern to staff, such as desirable ranges or improvements to the computerized roster of candidates.

9. Another danger was that the General Assembly might be asked to deal with questions outside its competence and that an attempt might be made to use it to settle possible differences between the staff and the Administration in spite of existing machinery for the purpose.

/...

(Mr. Brotodiningrat, Indonesia)

10. In the documents before the Committee it was noted that several organizations, among them WHO and ILO, already authorized access by the staff to the competent bodies. It would be interesting to know which bodies were being referred to: the Executive Board and the Governing Body or the World Health Assembly and the International Labour Conference.

11. It was important to produce strict and precise guidelines for the modalities of access by staff representatives to the Fifth Committee. If the Committee was unable to agree on modalities, the best thing to do might be to decide on requests submitted by the staff on a case-by-case basis.

12. Mr. KUDRYAVTSEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) thought that the question of access by staff representatives to the Fifth Committee should be considered in the light of the Charter, in particular Article 97, under which the Secretary-General was the "chief administrative officer of the Organization", and Article 101, which provided that "the staff shall be appointed by the Secretary-General under regulations established by the General Assembly". Thus, it appeared that the staff should take up the questions concerning them with the Secretary-General. Moreover, as the Secretary-General had recalled in paragraph 3 of his note (A/C.5/34/29), there was joint administrative machinery for settling problems that arose between the staff and the Administration. In addition, staff representatives had the right to address two subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly: the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the International Civil Service Commission. All questions of concern to the United Nations staff were considered in those two bodies.

13. Since the staff had ways of making their views known, both to the Secretary-General and to certain of the subsidiary bodies, the delegation of the USSR did not approve the conclusions of the Secretary-General and was against staff representatives having access to the Fifth Committee.

14. Mr. TOMMO MONTHE (United Republic of Cameroon) pointed out that the staff already had access to the Fifth Committee in so far as they could submit written statements to that Committee through the Secretary-General.

15. In its paper (A/C.5/34/CRP.5) the Staff Committee maintained that the right of access to the Fifth Committee was justified by the implications of international conventions concerning the right to organize. In that respect, and by transposition, the General Assembly had been equated with the public authority mentioned in those conventions. However, that was not a valid comparison since, under the Charter of the United Nations, the General Assembly had delegated to the Secretary-General its responsibilities with regard to staff management.

16. In his note, the Secretary-General stated that he had reached the conclusion that, on balance, both psychological and practical benefits could be obtained by the extension of the principle of staff consultation. However, he gave no examples of those benefits, nor did he indicate the reasons for which the existing procedures for consultation had not proved satisfactory in certain cases.

/...

(Mr. Tormo Monthe, Cameroon)

17. While expressing serious reservations regarding the suggestions of the Secretary-General, his delegation was prepared to examine any proposal which might be formulated.

18. Mr. RAMZY (Egypt) emphasized that the issue under consideration was important not only to the United Nations as an international organization but also to the Member States and the staff. In view of the fact that the Committee's eventual decision would have considerable repercussions for the future, it was essential that all aspects of the problem should be studied with the greatest care.

19. His delegation believed that, in the present case, it had never been more necessary to adhere strictly to the provisions of the Charter, especially those in Article 97, in which it was stipulated that the Secretary-General was the chief administrative officer of the Organization. Consequently, particular care should be exercised to ensure that any decision taken did not infringe that principle.

20. Although the responsibilities assigned to the Secretary-General under the terms of Article 97 of the Charter might be interpreted in various ways, the Egyptian delegation held the view that his functions related not only to the administration of the Organization but also to personnel questions. However, his delegation was aware of the fact that the interests of the Secretary-General did not necessarily coincide with those of the staff and the Secretary-General himself had acknowledged, in paragraph 8 of document A/C.5/34/29, that both psychological and practical benefits could be obtained by the extension of the principle of staff consultation.

21. That being the case, the Egyptian delegation thought that it would be in the interests of efficiency to grant - and it emphasized the latter term - permission to the staff representatives to present the views of the staff to the Fifth Committee on the understanding that such permission would relate only to statements and that such representatives could in no case enter into negotiations with the members of the Committee, express an opinion on draft resolutions being formulated, put questions to members or reply to questions. Furthermore, their statements could relate only to issues brought before the Committee.

22. Certain other conditions should also be observed with regard to the procedure governing the presentation of the views of the staff to the Fifth Committee. In particular, it was essential that the Secretary-General should be kept fully informed, that the Committee should act with his consent and that the staff representatives should be invited to speak only at the request of the Committee.

23. The Egyptian delegation regarded the fulfilment of those conditions as a prerequisite for the granting of permission to the staff representatives to present to the Fifth Committee the views of the staff regarding issues brought before the Committee.

/...

(Mr. Ramzy, Egypt)

24. Mr. GOSS (Australia) acknowledged that, if the proposal of the Secretary-General were to be applied as such, without more precise information regarding the nature and the course of future action, numerous problems would arise, as had already been emphasized by a number of speakers, who had rightly stressed the need to exercise great care. It was equally essential to adopt a balanced position, since it would hardly be constructive to consider only the problems raised without also taking into account the advantages that the proposal could offer.

25. Firstly, he pointed out that some delegations had spoken of staff "participation", which had never been under consideration. Secondly, he thought that excessive importance had been attached to the question of the physical presence of a staff representative in the Fifth Committee, whereas the point at issue was "access" by staff representatives to the Fifth Committee, and such access could be provided in various ways. He also thought it pointless to dwell on legal aspects, such as whether the staff would thereby be granted a right or a privilege. In his view, it would be much more useful to stick to the practical problems and to devise methods for their solution. If some agreement was reached, consideration could then be given to a trial period, as had been suggested by the representative of the United States, after which the question would be reviewed.

26. Some delegations had emphasized that the views of the staff were presented to the Fifth Committee through the Secretary-General. That was true only to a certain extent since the Secretary-General, when presenting his views, had to take various factors into account, whereas the views of the staff were based on different considerations. He wished to emphasize that the Fifth Committee had the right, and sometimes the duty, not to share the point of view of the Secretary-General or that of the staff, although, if it was obliged to take a decision to the disadvantage of the staff, it also had the right and the duty to acquaint itself with the opinion of the staff and to ensure that the latter were aware that the Committee had taken note of their opinion before reaching a decision. The psychological factor involved should not be disregarded.

27. Once that principle was accepted, what would be the best way to ensure access by staff representatives to the Fifth Committee in a manner that would not give rise to difficulties? It must be clearly understood that the Fifth Committee was not an employer - that role devolved on the Secretary-General - and the decision which the Fifth Committee might take concerning access by staff representatives should in no way prejudice that aspect of the Secretary-General's functions. Furthermore, the Fifth Committee should not be regarded as a court of appeal which would inherit all the problems that the Secretary-General and the staff were unable to solve. Nor was it a negotiating body; however, he did not think that by allowing the staff to express their views the Committee would be establishing a procedure which the staff would use in order to try to exert pressure.

28. The Australian delegation thought that it was essential that the staff should be able to express their opinion. It had not endorsed a proposal that had been made to that effect the previous year simply because it thought that that proposal

/...

(Mr. Goss, Australia)

had been submitted at a very inopportune moment. However, although the staff had not been able to make its views known to the working group established to formulate the text later adopted as resolution 33/143, the very fact that the Committee had subsequently decided to modify certain aspects of its draft after taking note of the position of the staff proved that another approach would have produced better results. Next year the Committee would be considering some highly controversial issues concerning the pension system and it would, therefore, be useful to know whether the staff had taken a unified stand in that respect. Affording the staff an opportunity to air their views would be just as advantageous to the Committee itself as to the members of the staff.

29. The respective positions of the Fifth Committee and of the staff had also often been compared to those of a parliament and of trade unions directly concerned by a particular parliamentary decision. That parallel was valid to a certain extent; while parliaments did not maintain formal relations with trade unions, it frequently happened that their committees or commissions listened to the opinion of those who would be affected by legislative measures under consideration. In that respect, the United Nations should have even greater obligations towards the staff since, in the case of a parliament, every elected member ran the risk of not being re-elected if his constituents were not satisfied, while the staff of the United Nations were obviously deprived of that course of action.

30. As for the procedure to be adopted, it would be much more useful if the staff was invited to submit a working paper on the questions of interest to it. If delegations had the working paper in advance, they could examine it together with other documentation submitted by the Secretariat, in whatever language they wished. Without automatically excluding an oral presentation, a document of that kind would probably be more useful. Moreover, it should be stipulated that the Committee would only hear one representative; there was no question of asking it to hear six representatives, describing six different points of view. Furthermore, the procedure envisaged should not be rigid: the Committee could decide whether it wished to hear the staff representative in the Committee itself or in a working group; or the staff could ask the Chairman, for example, for permission to express its ideas on points of interest to it. Lastly, as the Secretary-General had indicated in document A/C.5/34/29, it was important that the staff representative should be designated in an appropriate manner.

31. Obviously, a few practical conditions would still need to be determined and, in view of the preceding considerations, he would gladly participate in the activities of a working group entrusted with the task of elaborating a draft decision on that question.

32. Mr. BELYAEV (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) emphasized the tendentious nature of the documents submitted to the Committee. Those documents had not in any way taken account of the provisions of the Charter concerning the United Nations Secretariat and revealed a complete misunderstanding of the status of the Fifth Committee. The Committee was composed of representatives of States and Governments and was responsible for establishing effective machinery to ensure the achievement of the goals of the United Nations. Furthermore, besides the

/...

(Mr. Belyaev, Byelorussian SSR)

fact that the arguments put forward in those documents were often contradictory, they showed a total lack of restraint, respect and even courtesy. For example, document A/C.5/34/CRP.5 showed a lack of respect towards the highest official of the United Nations in stating that the reports submitted by the Secretary-General did not cover the views of staff members. It also showed a lack of respect towards such bodies as ICSC, on which the staff was represented, by stating that such representation was inadequate. Lastly, a lack of respect towards the Fifth Committee itself and towards its members was revealed in the third paragraph of that document, where it was asserted that the members of the Fifth Committee were not fully aware of the circumstances and problems of the staff or, in paragraph 13 of document A/C.5/34/CRP.6, where it was stated that by hearing the staff, the Committee would have a fuller awareness of the implications of various proposals. His delegation could not accept the assertion that the Committee was unaware of the implications of the proposals it considered.

33. One could also ask what was meant by the words "staff representatives". At the end of document A/C.5/34/CRP.5, the staff requested that its representatives should be granted the right to make a general address, to speak on the relevant agenda items as they came up for discussion in the Committee and even the right to cede place to the representative of another related association or union. Moreover, there was no indication as to the number of such associations and unions. Even assuming that a staff representative was authorized to speak, he asked what the Committee would do if a different representative also requested the right to speak on the following day in order to present a different point of view.

34. Furthermore, it was difficult to see what a staff representative could teach the Fifth Committee, which was already perfectly well-informed about staff matters. By the same token, he asked what a staff representative could possibly have to say about the ICSC reports, since liaison machinery between the staff and ICSC already existed and the staff could express its views in that manner.

35. He drew attention to the fact that staff members undertook specific obligations in making the oath or declaration when they joined the Secretariat. Accordingly, his delegation wished to state that, in its opinion, the arguments put forward were groundless and the suggestions proposed were to be rejected. His delegation deplored the fact that, when so much remained to be done, the Committee was devoting so much time to the discussion of an idea, without even knowing the origin of it, its specific modalities or the implications it had for the Organization.

36. Mr. BROCHARD (France) said that his delegation was satisfied with the proposals made by the Secretariat in document A/C.5/34/29. In fact, the Secretariat seemed to have clearly understood that the current trend was towards an enlargement of all types of contact, and his delegation welcomed that attitude, which it did not consider to be demagogic but, on the contrary, very courageous.

37. In his opinion, it would be fruitless to review all the reasons in favour of permitting such hearings, within very precise limits, it being clearly understood

/...

(Mr. Brochard, France)

that they would constitute only hearings, not dialogue or negotiation, since responsibility for the latter came within the competence of the Secretary-General alone, in accordance with Articles 97 and 101 of the Charter. Within those limits, his delegation endorsed the conclusions and recommendations proposed by the Secretary-General and was prepared to support any draft decision submitted to that effect.

38. Mr. BRUCE (Canada) said that, in general, his delegation supported the proposals and recommendations of the Secretary-General contained in document A/C.5/34/29. The access by staff representatives to the Committee should be made official, and perhaps a resolution instituting that arrangement for a trial period of two years might be adopted. The staff should have the right to express its point of view on questions of special concern to it, but the Committee should not initiate any process of association or negotiation with the Staff Union, since that might encroach on the Secretary-General's responsibilities.

39. In addition, the officers of the Fifth Committee should determine when there was cause to invite a single staff representative to express the views of his or her colleagues. Lastly, the work of the Committee would be facilitated if the staff provided documents describing its position in advance, as the representative of Australia had suggested.

40. Mr. UCHUNO (Nigeria) said that his delegation was opposed to access by staff representatives to the Fifth Committee. In his opinion, it would be better to improve the functioning of existing machinery. When difficulties had arisen in the past, the Secretary-General, in his capacity as employer, had informed the Fifth Committee of the facts of the staff's problems, through the intermediary of Secretariat budgetary experts. His delegation thought that, as a legislative body, the Fifth Committee was not authorized to deal directly with the staff; there were already enough bodies with jurisdiction in such matters. Only as a last resort should certain problems be brought before the Committee. Instead of giving the impression that he wished to relieve himself of his responsibilities, the Secretary-General should seek to restore trust in relations between the Secretariat leadership and the staff and to make maximum use of the means available to him, so that the Fifth Committee could have a complete picture of the staff problems brought before it.

41. Mr. GODFREY (New Zealand) pointed out that his delegation had always been in favour of access by staff representatives to the Committee and, accordingly, he was willing to accept some of the Secretary-General's proposals. However, the Committee should not act as arbitrator between the staff and the Secretary-General; rather, it should help to foster the exchange of information. For that reason, the staff's access to the Committee should be governed by specific guidelines, as the representatives of Australia and Egypt had indicated. Despite the small amount of time remaining, the Committee should thus try to formulate those guidelines without delay and to elaborate a draft resolution on that matter. His delegation was prepared to participate in the drafting of such a resolution.

/...

42. Mr. HOUNA GOLO (Chad) noted that, in document A/C.5/34/29, the Secretary-General actually requested complete staff participation in the work of the Fifth Committee, particularly when he said that it would seem appropriate to allow for a staff representative to comment on any draft resolutions or decisions prior to the Committee's final action. Such participation was unacceptable. If that proposal was adopted, the Secretary-General would lose his prerogatives in the field of personnel management which, moreover, seemed to be what he desired. One might wonder what his reaction would be if the Committee invited a staff representative to address it, without even informing him.

43. However, his delegation believed that times had changed, and thus contact should be established between the staff and the Committee, provided that the precise terms of such contact were established. It would perhaps be best to set up an ad hoc working group for that purpose, as had already been suggested. In any case, there was no question of disregarding the provisions of Articles 97 and 101 of the Charter concerning the Secretary-General and the staff of the United Nations.

44. Mr. YANGA (Zaire) drew attention to the fact that, in accordance with the Charter, the staff was under the administrative authority of the Secretary-General. Consequently, it would be more logical if all problems involving the staff, particularly its complaints, were submitted to the Committee by the Secretary-General. As for the proposal to allow the staff to have access to the Committee, his delegation could agree to allow a staff representative merely to present the staff's views on specific questions, when the Committee considered it necessary. The staff representative should not have the right to participate in the work of the Committee, or to ask questions or answer them. In his delegation's opinion, the Committee, which was composed of Member States, should not be obliged to work under pressure from the staff. If other bodies, for example, ILO, had agreed to allow their staff to attend certain meetings of their legislative bodies, such precedents should be examined with the utmost caution. Accordingly, his delegation had strong reservations about the entire question of staff participation in the work of the Committee.

45. Mr. KEMAL (Pakistan) said that his delegation was quite prepared to make the maximum possible allowance for the expectations of staff members. Nevertheless, their present situation could hardly be described as unsatisfactory. Employment conditions at the United Nations were probably the best in the world from every point of view. Even if they were unsatisfactory, means of communication already existed. In fact, the staff could make its position known through the Secretary-General and the International Civil Service Commission, although it was true that the Fifth Committee, by giving priority to the interests of the Organization, had not always accepted its recommendations. If the staff was given the right of direct access to the Fifth Committee, there would be a risk of limiting its authority. His delegation therefore considered that the Committee should adhere to the existing practice of communicating with the Secretary-General. Nevertheless in special cases it might invite the Chairman to consult with a representative of the staff or even, following the proposal of the representative of Chad, to establish a special working group with responsibility for making such contact. In any event, it was not desirable that the Committee should accept the recommendations of the Secretary-General contained in paragraphs 11 and 12 of document A/C.5/34/29.

46. Mr. BAMBA (Upper Volta) reminded the Committee that, under the Charter of the United Nations, the Secretary-General was the chief administrative officer of the Organization. His delegation was aware that the staff was represented by unions, whose purpose was to defend the interests of their members and that such interests might not always coincide with those of the Organization. In his view, it would be difficult to take a decision on the question of the access of staff representatives to the Fifth Committee without knowing beforehand what the modalities of such access should be. The staff worked under the authority of the Secretary-General and his delegation would not wish such modalities, once established, to undermine the authority of the Secretary-General or for the Committee to become a tribunal in case of differences between the Secretary-General and the staff. While his delegation was satisfied with the proposals of the Secretary-General as regards the principle of access by staff representatives to the Fifth Committee, it would comment in more detail during the debate on the modalities of such access.

47. Mr. THOMAS (Trinidad and Tobago) said that his delegation supported the comments made by the representatives of Australia and Egypt. The staff had access to the Secretary-General who had taken its views into account when he had submitted proposals to the various legislative organs. It was also clear that there could be differences between the position of the Secretary-General on the one hand and that of the staff on the other. The question which arose was to determine the point in the decision-making process at which such differences should be taken into consideration. If there was intervention after the decision, direct access by staff representatives to the Fifth Committee would lead to a situation in which the latter would become the arbitrator between the Secretary-General and the staff; it was therefore preferable that such an approach should be made to the Secretary-General who would take it into consideration. In the case of intervention before a decision, his delegation, while recognizing that there was a need to hear the views of the staff, considered that such intervention could take place through the intermediary of the Secretary-General. A third possibility would be when certain aspects of an issue might have escaped the Secretary-General and the legislative bodies; however, there were provisions in the mandates of a number of organs, in particular the International Civil Service Commission, for the staff to be heard by those organs.

48. It was therefore clear that, in present circumstances, the staff always had access to the various organs responsible for the elaboration of proposals which would subsequently be submitted to legislative bodies. His delegation could not therefore accept the principle of institutionalized access of staff representatives to the Fifth Committee. It also wondered whether it might not be possible to strengthen existing mechanisms in that area. In that case, direct access of staff representatives to the Fifth Committee should be permitted only at the specific invitation of the Committee for the purpose of clarifying certain points. In any case, his delegation was prepared to participate in a working group which would consider additional means whereby the staff could express its views.

49. Mr. P. FALL (Senegal) stressed the importance of the issue. The staff was already represented at various levels but there was a gap: the Fifth Committee was often called upon to take important decisions without being able to hear the

(Mr. P. Fall, Senegal)

staff representatives in advance. His delegation was convinced that giving representatives the right of direct access to the Committee would in no way undermine the authority of the Secretary-General since the latter had said that he could see many advantages in such a process. His delegation shared the view of the Secretary-General and considered that the staff should be heard before decisions were taken, on the understanding that the modalities had yet to be developed.

50. Mr. AKSOY (Turkey) said that his delegation recognized that there were many advantages in giving staff representatives direct access to the Fifth Committee. However, the staff should avail themselves of existing possibilities for intervention before decisions were taken by the legislative organs. His delegation in general supported the proposals of the Secretary-General contained in document A/C.5/34/29. According to that document, the principle of access did not undermine either the authority of the Secretary-General nor the role which he currently played vis-à-vis the legislative organs of the Organization. The decision to invite staff representatives to express their views was up to the Fifth Committee when it considered it necessary. One possibility would be that staff representatives should participate in the work of a working group to be established by the Fifth Committee for the purpose.

51. The CHAIRMAN considered that there should be consultations on the issue and that they should be co-ordinated by Mr. Buj-Flores, Vice-Chairman of the Committee. The first meeting could take place at the conclusion of the Committee's meeting that afternoon. Depending on the progress of such consultations, the Vice-Chairman would indicate when it would be appropriate for the Committee to resume its debate on the question.

52. Mr. VAN NOUHUYS (Netherlands) said that his delegation had been concerned by the comments made by a number of delegations who had tended to adhere too closely to the arguments contained in document A/C.5/34/CRP.5 and 6. His delegation shared the views of the delegations of Egypt, Australia and New Zealand: namely, that the thrust of the staff proposal required elucidation. Once the question had been formulated, it would be appropriate to study the arguments for and against the proposals. His delegation noted that there were already many channels of communication and methods for consultation between the administration and the staff but the results of such consultations was always presented by one of the parties, namely, the administration. Also, without in any way doubting the good faith of the representatives of the administration, his delegation considered that there were occasions when the representatives of the staff should be heard from directly. It would of course be up to the Fifth Committee to decide when such access was appropriate.

53. His delegation considered that the psychological factor should not be underestimated on the issue of consultations with staff representatives. It must nevertheless be stressed that if there were no limits on such access the authority of the Secretary-General could be undermined and the Fifth Committee transformed into a sort of tribunal. But with goodwill on all sides, it would seem possible to enjoy the advantages of such a procedure while eliminating the disadvantages. His delegation therefore favoured the principle of access by staff representatives to the Fifth Committee and hoped that the modalities of such access could be discussed during the current session.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.