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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 6th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. SALIM (President of the General Assembly)

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ALGERIA, ARGENTINA, BANGLADESH, BHUTAN, GUYANA, INDIA, MALDIVES, NEPAL,  
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- (b) AMENDMENT SUBMITTED BY THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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The meeting was called to order at 9.40 a.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA OF THE THIRTY-FOURTH REGULAR SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND ALLOCATION OF ITEMS:

- (a) REQUEST FOR THE INCLUSION OF AN ADDITIONAL ITEM SUBMITTED BY ALGERIA, ARGENTINA, BANGLADESH, BHUTAN, GUYANA, INDIA, MALDIVES, NEPAL, NIGERIA AND SRI LANKA (A/34/246)
- (b) AMENDMENT SUBMITTED BY THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (A/BUR/34/L.1)

1. The CHAIRMAN said that the General Committee had before it a request submitted by Algeria, Argentina, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Guyana, India, Maldives, Nepal, Nigeria and Sri Lanka, for the inclusion of an additional agenda item entitled "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council" (A/34/246). In that connexion, the United States delegation had submitted an amendment (A/BUR/34/L.1). The representative of India had asked to be allowed to participate in the discussion of the item in accordance with rule 43 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

2. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Mishra (India) took a place at the Committee table.

3. Mr. MISHRA (India) said that the request for the inclusion of a new item on an increase in the membership of the Security Council had been made in response to substantive considerations that were made clear in the explanatory memorandum annexed to the proposal (A/34/246). The sponsors believed that it was very important that the proposed new item should be dealt with at the current session of the General Assembly and their conviction had been reinforced by certain circumstances which had shown that the idea of having equitable representation on the Security Council reflecting increased membership of the United Nations and the various trends of opinion among its members was even more timely now than it had been only a few months earlier. Those circumstances concerned not only the candidacies for membership on the Council, but also the fact that the Security Council was considering issues of the highest importance for the non-aligned and developing countries.

4. The sponsors of the request had deliberately decided not to include the question of an increase in the membership of the Security Council in other items already on the agenda of the General Assembly, mainly because those items, particularly the item allocated to the Sixth Committee concerning a review of the Charter (agenda item 114), had been on the agenda for many years and had their own history. The sponsors of the request had a more specific aim that must be separated from the broader item that included a review of the Charter. The aim was to increase the membership of the Security Council so that it would more accurately and equitably reflect the membership of the United Nations. The sponsors had thus thought it appropriate to request consideration of the matter as a separate item.

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5. Mr. PETREEE (United States of America) said he supported the view that delegations were entitled to have matters of concern to them discussed by the General Assembly. He also believed that if the Assembly were to function effectively or, indeed, to continue to function at all, it must attempt to deal rationally with the work before it. When there was an existing item under which a new matter could be discussed it should be discussed in the context of that item. Any other approach would substantially undo what had been accomplished during the current year with regard to rationalizing the procedures of the Assembly. For those reasons, his delegation proposed that the request contained in document A/34/246 should be amended.

6. In proposing the amendment, his delegation was in no way expressing a view on the merits of the proposal. Some of the premises set out in the explanatory memorandum were at variance with the views of the United States Government, but it was not the moment to discuss the substance, since that would be inconsistent with the rules of procedure. He would merely state that the views of the United States delegation concerning the questions raised in document A/34/246 could only become more negative if its goals were pursued in a manner inconsistent with a rational approach to the work of the Assembly. He regretted that such a complex matter was brought up in the closing weeks of an already heavily burdened session, and that it was not submitted in conformity with the criteria of rule 15 of the rules of procedure. His delegation consequently hoped that the General Committee would act in conformity with its previous decisions regarding the rationalization of the work of the General Assembly, and adopt the proposed amendment.

7. Mr. PETROVSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the Soviet delegation had objections of both principle and practice to the request for the inclusion of an item on the question of equitable representation on the Security Council. The proposal to increase the membership of the Council amounted to an amendment to one of the most important provisions of the Charter. The Soviet Union's position of principle in that respect was well known and had not changed. The Soviet Union was opposed to a review of the Charter, because it believed that it had passed the most difficult test, the test of time, and fully met the needs of the United Nations.

8. In their explanatory memorandum, the sponsors of the proposal stated that an increase in the membership of the Security Council was necessary in order to strengthen its role in the maintenance of international peace and security. It was not the fault of the Charter of the United Nations nor of its provisions that the Security Council could not always adopt the necessary decisions and that areas of tension and vestiges of colonial and racist domination persisted in the world. The States Members of the United Nations must observe the principles of the Charter and respect the decisions of the Security Council. The Charter provided possibilities and means that had not yet been explored. Efforts should not focus on a review and amendment of the Charter, but should rather concentrate on the due observance of its provisions.

9. The sponsors of the request stated in the explanatory memorandum that the membership of the Security Council must be enlarged in order properly to reflect

(Mr. Petrovsky, USSR)

the membership of the United Nations. However, according to the Charter, the non-permanent members of the Security Council were to be elected not on the basis of proportional representation but, as stipulated in Article 23, with due regard in the first instance to the contribution of Member States to the maintenance of international peace and security. It was therefore not possible to apply a simple mathematical formula based on the number of Member States.

10. The explanatory memorandum argued that non-aligned and developing countries were under-represented in the Security Council. His delegation would point out that the representation of the non-permanent members was such that the Council could not adopt any decision without their assent. Moreover, an increase in membership would have a serious impact on the effectiveness and promptness of actions taken by that major organ of the United Nations.

11. In addition to opposing the request for the reasons of principle he had stated, his delegation regretted that it had been submitted to the General Committee despite its being known that many delegations were not in sympathy with it and that it ran counter to the spirit of co-operation which was needed in order to solve the urgent problems before the Assembly. Discussion of the proposal could not produce constructive results and would only cause unnecessary friction among Members. His delegation could not, therefore, support the request for the inclusion in the agenda of the General Assembly of the additional item proposed in document A/34/246.

12. Mr. LEPRETTE (France) said that his delegation welcomed the amendment to the request for the inclusion of an additional item (A/34/246) proposed by the United States delegation in document A/BUR/34/L.1, since the submission of so important a question to the General Assembly without prior consultations was neither appropriate nor urgent. Rationalization of the work of the General Assembly required that related subjects should be grouped together under the same heading. Moreover, the issue raised in document A/34/246 clearly came within the field of competence of the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization, which had been meeting for several years and whose mandate was precisely to consider questions of that kind. At the last session of the Special Committee, early in 1979, proposals similar to the request under consideration had been made. His delegation would not refuse to consider that proposal in the Special Committee, although it was firmly opposed to its adoption.

13. Sir Anthony PARSONS (United Kingdom) said that his delegation's objections to the request contained in document A/34/26 were well known. It did not deny that the question of an increase in the membership of the Security Council was important, but it did not believe that it required consideration as a matter of urgency. The membership of the United Nations had remained more or less stable for the past few years. Moreover, as the representative of a country which had assisted at the birth of many new States, he did not foresee the emergence of more than two in the next few months. Lastly, the General Assembly session would be ending in 13 or 14 working days and a great deal of work was still outstanding, many substantive items had not yet been considered in plenary meetings and a number of reports were expected to be submitted shortly.

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(Sir Anthony Parsons, United Kingdom)

14. His delegation did not usually oppose the inclusion of items in the agenda, but rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly laid down clear provisions for the inclusion of additional items. His delegation supported the amendment submitted by the United States delegation (A/BUR/34/L.1) and would support the inclusion of the proposed item only if the amendment was accepted.

15. Mr. EL-CHOUFI (Syrian Arab Republic) said that, in his view, there were no valid obstacles to the General Assembly's discussing the question of a more equitable representation on the Security Council that would reflect the true situation in the United Nations. His delegation therefore supported the request contained in document A/34/246. It could not agree to the amendment proposed by the United States delegation because it believed that its purpose was to delay consideration of the subject. In the words of the English saying, justice delayed was justice denied.

16. Mr. ILLUECA (Panama) said that, despite the objections which had been expressed, the request for the inclusion of an additional item was fully justified. Some delegations had pointed out that the proposal had been submitted late. However, it was clear that it reflected the wishes not only of many States but also of large masses of population which wanted a more just composition of the Security Council. He understood that consultations had taken place, and he knew the experience and sagacity of the States submitting the proposal.

17. The General Assembly must deal with questions of that kind, so that viable solutions could be found. If it could be said that the Security Council was fulfilling the aspirations of peoples, its composition would not need to be changed. However, the Council was not responding to the problems of the modern world, and it must be strengthened in such a way that its composition reflected the concerns of the peoples. Panama resolutely supported the inclusion of the item and would not vote for the amendment because the question deserved special, separate consideration.

18. It was a well-known fact that the great Powers were not in sympathy with the proposal. It was one of the few occasions when the Eastern and Western Powers acted together; he wished that they would do so in other matters. The position of the small and medium-sized countries on the subject was just, sound, logical, reasonable and legal, and his delegation therefore hoped that the proposal would receive majority support so that the General Assembly could consider that important item at its current session.

19. Mr. GURINOVICH (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that his delegation had repeatedly stated its position against any amendment of the Charter of the United Nations. According to document A/34/246, the reason for the request was the need "to strengthen the primary role of the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security". He asked whether the function of the Security Council was being called in question, and whether it had not been defined with sufficient clarity in the Charter. In his delegation's opinion, the activities of the Security Council did not depend on the size of its membership because, as laid down in the Charter, the Council acted on behalf of all States.

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(Mr. Gurinovich, Byelorussian SSR)

The effectiveness of the Council's action depended on how States implemented the provisions of the Charter and the relevant resolutions.

20. One of the consequences of increasing the membership of the Security Council would be to reduce its ability to take prompt and specific action. Moreover, in accordance with Article 31 of the Charter, any Member State could participate in the discussion of any question brought before the Security Council whenever the latter considered that the interests of that Member were specially affected. Thus, the interests of all States were protected in the Security Council.

21. In accordance with rule 14 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the inclusion of supplementary items in the agenda must be requested at least 30 days before the date fixed for the opening of a regular session; under rule 15, additional items of an important and urgent character could be placed on the agenda during a session. However, the item in question was not of an urgent character, since the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization was considering a similar proposal. Rule 15 also stated that no additional item might be considered until seven days had elapsed since it had been placed on the agenda. The end of the current session was very near and, for those technical reasons, it was not possible to consider the request. However, the position of the Byelorussian SSR was based essentially on a question of principle, and his delegation could not support the proposal for the inclusion of the item in the agenda in any form.

22. Mr. MUBAREZ (Yemen) said it was necessary to review the composition of the Security Council at the current session of the General Assembly. His delegation considered the request made in document A/34/246 just and reasonable and therefore supported the proposal without any amendment.

23. Mr. STEPHANIDES (Cyprus) noted that some delegations were very interested in having the item in question discussed at the current session. It would therefore be counterproductive to prevent its inclusion in the agenda. In view of the precedent set by the enlargement of the membership of the Security Council in 1973, a debate on the subject and the adoption of decisions on it must be permitted. The great importance of the question justified its inclusion as a separate item.

24. Mr. MISHRA (India) said, with regard to the United States amendment (A/BUR/34/L.1), that referring the matter to the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization would be tantamount to burying it. Acceptance of the amendment would therefore constitute an injustice. As for the timeliness of submission of the proposal, document A/34/246 was dated 14 November 1979. The General Committee had recommended the inclusion of another item in the agenda after that date, so that objections based on pressure of time did not carry much weight.

25. Article 23 of the Charter referred to equitable geographical distribution. Since the membership of the Security Council had already been enlarged in the past with the consent of its permanent members, the argument that the Charter

(Mr. Mishra, India)

made no provision for increasing the membership was irrelevant. He agreed that there should be a full and substantive debate on the question, and he believed that there was enough time at the current session to hold such a debate and to reach agreement on how to proceed. If the item was included in the agenda of the General Assembly, it should be considered in plenary meeting and not in Committee.

26. Mr. SINCLAIR (Guyana) said that the objections which had been made to the inclusion of the proposed item in the agenda of the General Assembly were contrary to the interests of the small countries. His delegation therefore associated itself with the comments of the Indian delegation and supported the request contained in document A/34/246.

27. Mr. PETREE (United States of America), referring to the comments of the representative of India, said that his delegation's intention in submitting the amendment contained in document A/BUR/34/L.1 had not been to prevent a debate on the item. The fact that the work of the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization was slow was due to the complexity and difficulty - sometimes of a political nature - of the questions it was considering. His delegation was not opposed to a debate on the question, but was focusing attention on the rationalization of work of the General Assembly and, in view of the suitability of the Special Committee for dealing with an item of that kind, on the desirability of dealing with it through the machinery established by the United Nations.

28. Mrs. CASTRO DE BARISH (Costa Rica) supported the request contained in document A/34/246.

29. The CHAIRMAN said that he would put to the vote the United States amendment (A/BUR/34/L.1) and then the request for the inclusion of an additional item in the agenda contained in document A/34/246.

30. The amendment was rejected by 13 votes to 7, with 3 abstentions.

31. The Committee decided, by 19 votes to 5, with 2 abstentions, to recommend that the General Assembly should include the item in the agenda.

32. Mr. PIRSON (Belgium) said he regretted that the amendment had been rejected, since it would have enabled the Special Committee to consider the item in a calm and reflective atmosphere. His delegation hoped that the States on which the Charter conferred primary responsibility would ensure that the balance established between the General Assembly and the Security Council was not altered.

33. Mr. PETROVSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation had voted against the inclusion of the item in the agenda and also against the amendment, since the latter did not affect the substance of the issue. His delegation could not agree to consideration in the General Assembly of items which were contrary to the Charter or the objective of which was to detract from its validity.

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34. The CHAIRMAN said that, if there was no objection, he would take it that the Committee decided to recommend that the General Assembly should consider the item directly in plenary meeting.

35. It was so decided.

36. Mr. MISHRA (India) thanked the Chairman and members of the Committee for recommending the inclusion of the item in the agenda of the General Assembly and its allocation to the plenary Assembly.

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.