

65th meeting

Monday, 17 August 1981, at 10.55 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. T. T. B. KOH (Singapore)

Organization of work

1. The CHAIRMAN announced that the purpose of the present meeting was to consider a programme of work, which was being recommended unanimously by all members of the Collegium, for the third week of the resumed session. The proposed programme was flexible and additional meetings could be included if requested.
2. The programme made provision for informal plenary meetings of the Conference at which it would consider, first, the proposals of the Drafting Committee on Part XI (A/CONF.62/L.67/Add.16 and A/CONF.62/L.75/Add.2-4) and, subsequently, the Drafting Committee's proposals on Part XV (A/CONF.62/L.75/Add.1 and 2). An informal plenary meeting had been scheduled at the end of the third week to enable the Conference to decide on the sites of the Authority and of the international Tribunal for the law of the sea. Consultations on the latter issues had not been easy, but he hoped that an agreement would be reached as a result of the meetings which he was to hold later in the day with representatives of the six candidate countries and with the chairmen of the regional groups.
3. Other matters which required consideration included the programme of work for the remainder of the resumed session, the question as to what the end-product of the session was to be, and the question whether it would be necessary to extend the session for a fifth week. Meetings of the General Committee and plenary meetings to discuss those matters had been scheduled for the afternoon of Friday, 21 August, but would be postponed until Monday, 24 August, if the Group of 77 wished to hold a plenary meeting that afternoon.
4. Mr. UL-HAQUE (Pakistan), Chairman of the Group of 77, said he had been instructed by the Group to express the wish that the programme of work should be so arranged that the text of the draft convention could be formalized by the end of the current session. The Group therefore attached great importance to the possibility of extending the session for a fifth week in order to provide time for the formalization of the text.
5. The CHAIRMAN expressed the hope that discussion on the points raised by the representative of Pakistan could be postponed until the next meeting of the General Committee.
6. Mr. UL-HAQUE (Pakistan) said that his intention, in transmitting the views of the Group of 77, had been to ask that the programme of work should be organized in such a way that the text could be formalized at the present resumed session.
7. Mr. KOZYREV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation attached great importance to the statement made by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77. The General Committee was ostensibly considering the programme of work of the Conference for the third week of the session only; but in fact it was also considering the programme for the entire second half of the resumed session, since the results achieved during the third week would have a decisive impact on the results of the session as a whole.
8. At the 151st meeting, the Conference had affirmed that the present session must strictly abide by the decision of 28 August 1980 (A/CONF.62/BUR.13/Rev.1) to complete the negotiations and adopt the convention in 1981. The Conference had therefore decided to concentrate its attention on the few outstanding issues and finally to complete the drafting of the convention. In accordance with its wishes, the United States delegation had expressed its comments on the draft

convention at an informal plenary meeting on 5 August 1981.

9. Already at that meeting on 5 August, the delegation of the Soviet Union had drawn the Conference's attention to the fact that the position of the United States, as stated by the Head of its delegation, clearly demonstrated that the United States intended to go on impeding the work of the Conference at the resumed session as well, so as to prevent the completion of negotiations and the adoption of a convention on the law of the sea on the basis of the existing draft.

10. The United States delegation's comments showed that the United States was in fact aiming at a radical revision of Part XI of the draft; but such a revision would destroy the whole "package" of compromise solutions on which the draft was based, since Part XI was an integral part of the "package". Also, meetings to hear comments by the representative of the United States were taking up a lot of the Conference's time and diverting it from its scheduled programme of work. Informal plenaries on participation, a meeting of the working group of 21 and meetings of the General Committee and the plenary Conference scheduled for 14 August had all had to be cancelled, and the work of the Conference had slowed down.

11. However, the statement by the Chairman of the Group of 77 at the present meeting reflected the determination of the majority of the participants in the Conference to make progress and complete the programme of work.

12. The representative of Hungary had also stated that the group of Eastern European States was in total agreement with the Group of 77 on the need to avoid reopening the discussion on issues on which negotiations had been completed, and to accelerate negotiations on outstanding issues. The Hungarian representative had made some concrete suggestions for speeding up the Conference's work.

13. The Soviet delegation welcomed the statement made by the President of the Conference on 10 August to the effect that there was now general agreement on the need to accelerate the Conference's work and to reach agreement on outstanding issues as soon as possible. It had also been glad to hear the President's assurances that negotiations on the question of participation would be completed before the end of the present session, and the promise that negotiations on the Preparatory Commission would also be finished by then. The Soviet delegation likewise supported the President's appeal to participants in the negotiations on delimitation criteria to complete those negotiations as soon as possible; and it welcomed the understanding attitude displayed by the President with regard to the proposal by the Group of 77 and the group of Eastern European States that a time-limit should be set for the completion of the work of the Drafting Committee. Also, the programme for further work to be considered on Friday, 21 August, should contain a precise time-table for the completion of negotiations on outstanding issues, so that the Conference could at last complete and adopt the convention and thus finally fulfil the task assigned to it.

14. The CHAIRMAN said that, if there were no objections, he would take it that the General Committee wished to recommend to the Conference the programme of work proposed by the Collegium.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 11.20 a.m.