

United Nations
GENERAL
ASSEMBLY
THIRTY-EIGHTH SESSION
Official Records*



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FIRST COMMITTEE
1st meeting
held on
Tuesday, 20 September 1983
at 4.55 p.m.
New York

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 1ST MEETING

Temporary Chairman: Mr. ILLUECA (President of the General Assembly)

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DISTR. GENERAL
A/C.1/38/PV.1
21 September 1983
ENGLISH

The meeting was called to order at 4.55 p.m.

ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (interpretation from Spanish): Rule 103 of the rules of procedure provides that each Main Committee shall elect a Chairman, two Vice Chairmen and a Rapporteur. These officers shall be elected on the basis of equitable geographical distribution, experience and personal competence.

The elections shall be held by secret ballot unless the Committee decides otherwise in an election where only one candidate is standing. The nomination of each candidate shall be limited to one speaker, after which the Committee shall immediately proceed to the election.

Furthermore, rule 110 of the rules of procedure provides that congratulations to the officers of a Main Committee shall not be expressed except by the Chairman of the previous session or, in his absence, by a member of his delegation - after all the officers of the Committee have been elected.

This meeting has been convened to elect the Chairman of the First Committee. Are there any nominations?

Mr. GBEHO (Ghana): Sir, it is a very pleasant duty for me to nominate a candidate as the next Chairman of the First Committee, but may I first take this opportunity to congratulate you most sincerely on your election to the high office of President of the thirty-eighth session of the General Assembly. In the course of the next few days, the chairman of the delegation of Ghana will have the opportunity to pay you a formal and richly deserved tribute, but for the moment allow me to express my personal confidence in your great skill as a diplomat and negotiator, for I believe that it augurs well for this historic session to have you leading it.

May I also pay a very warm personal tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Imre Hollai, with whom it was a pleasure for me to work harmoniously during the thirty-seventh session of the General Assembly. He was an understanding, fair and most dedicated leader throughout that session, balancing an insistence on active and up-to-date work with sympathy and a fine sense of humour. Being himself a veteran of the First Committee, Mr. Hollai provided a leadership that was most instructive in matters related to that Committee, and I personally learnt a lot from him.

The First Committee begins this session against a worrisome political and diplomatic backdrop in international affairs. In addition to the regrettable lack of any substantial progress in the consideration of international political and security matters during the thirty-seventh session, the last year has been a period of increased tension between the super-Powers. No Member of this Assembly would doubt that East-West relations have plunged to their lowest level in two decades. It is no less disturbing that we have lived in the past 12 months, and still live, in times of increased military activities, gunboat diplomacy, deployment of nuclear missiles and, sadly, very little progress, if any at all, in the crucial disarmament talks.

These are ominous circumstances for humanity and our lives continue in the shadow of an unprecedented military and nuclear threat. It goes without saying therefore that the task of the First Committee will be impossible without the skill and personality of a talented chairman. I am pleased to inform this meeting that the Government of Norway has decided to present the candidature of one of its ablest and most trusted servants, Mr. Tom Eric Vraalsen, for this post. Norway has an impeccable record as a peace-loving nation and its assiduous contribution towards the establishment of international peace needs no elaboration. The country that provides the world-renowned reward for individual excellence in the pursuit of peace on our planet, through the institution of the Nobel Peace Prize, could not, in my humble view, come to the assistance of the international community at a better time.

So it is with great pride and confidence that I nominate Mr. Tom Eric Vraalsen as Chairman of the First Committee of the thirty-eighth session of the General Assembly. Ambassador Vraalsen is a well-known figure in United Nations circles, not only because he contributes wisdom and leadership to United Nations endeavours, but also because his own career as a foreign service officer has been developed around the United Nations and its ideals.

(Mr. Gbeho, Ghana)

He has even co-authored a book on the United Nations which is widely used in Norwegian colleges and universities. His diplomatic experience covers almost all the continents, as he has served in various positions in his country's diplomatic missions in Peking, Cairo, Manila and Djakarta, as well as having been a member of high-level delegations to Tanzania, Zambia, Botswana, Mozambique, Ethiopia and the United Kingdom. He has also served as the deputy Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations.

Perhaps one of the most welcome facts in favour of Ambassador Vraalsen is that with his election today as Chairman of the First Committee he will join the comity of the very few diplomats who have achieved in their career at the United Nations the distinguished record of chairing two Committees of the General Assembly. Many will recall that Ambassador Vraalsen was elected Chairman of the Fourth Committee at the thirty-first session, not to mention his vice-chairmanship of the Committee of 24 from 1976 to 1977.

But perhaps the most relevant information about Ambassador Vraalsen is that he is highly respected by all because of his distinguished record of active contribution to the work of the First Committee. I found his support and assistance invaluable during the last session, when he served the Committee as one of its Vice-Chairmen.

There can be no doubt, therefore, that Ambassador Vraalsen possesses the qualities required to manage the delicate and intractable business of the First Committee in general and the search for genuine and complete disarmament in particular. I have the greatest pleasure, therefore, in nominating Mr. Tom Eric Vraalsen, scholar, diplomat and international negotiator, for the post of Chairman of the First Committee.

May I take this opportunity to extend my warm wishes to Mr. Vraalsen for success in the discharge of his very heavy responsibilities.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (interpretation from Spanish): The representative of Ghana has nominated Mr. Tom Eric Vraalsen of Norway. Since only one candidate has been presented, I propose that under rule 103 the Committee decide not to hold a secret ballot.

It was so decided.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (interpretation from Spanish): I therefore declare His Excellency Mr. Tom Eric Vraalsen of Norway elected Chairman of the First Committee by acclamation.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.