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Chairman: Mr. Pote SARASIN (Thailand).

AGENDA ITEM 55

Translation of some official documents of the General Assembly into the Arabic language in accordance with rule 59 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly (A/2681, A/2761; A/C.5/579; A/C.5/L.294) (*continued*)

1. Mr. CALAMARI (Panama), speaking as a co-sponsor of the joint draft resolution on the translation of some official documents of the General Assembly into the Arabic language in accordance with rule 59 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly (A/C.5/L.294, emphasized the great contribution made by that language to Western culture and civilization.

2. The translation of certain United Nations documents relating to the political, economic and social work of the Organization into Arabic would bring that work to the knowledge of millions of human beings who knew no other language. More importance should be attached to that fact than to any monetary considerations, and in that connexion he emphasized that the cost involved in making the translations requested

would be a very modest one. He trusted that members of the Fifth Committee would appreciate the importance of the resolution before them and support it.

3. Mr. HASSAN (Pakistan) said that his delegation was happy to be a co-sponsor of the joint draft resolution before the Committee. After paying a tribute to the Indian representative for supporting the resolution, he pointed out that many citizens of Pakistan knew Arabic, a language spoken by vast numbers of people whose great cultural heritage was well known. He emphasized that the Arab world should be looked upon as a cultural entity, and not as a political and geographical mosaic.

4. He considered that the fears expressed by the Norwegian representative at the preceding meeting that the adoption of the joint draft resolution might encourage other nations to ask for their languages to be recognized were exaggerated. Most of the Member States came from parts of the world where one or the other of the five official languages of the United Nations was spoken. However, the language of six Member States, and of two States which were awaiting admission to the United Nations, was Arabic. The sponsors of the draft resolution had not asked for Arabic to be given the status of an official language, but had merely requested that a limited number of documents should be translated into it. The Arab world was awakening politically and Member States should view that awakening with sympathy and encourage the countries concerned. The resolution before the Committee should therefore not be considered purely on the basis of its financial implications.

5. Mr. SERRANO GARCIA (El Salvador) said that, in sponsoring the joint draft resolution, his delegation had not merely considered the great number of people who spoke Arabic, but had borne in mind the important contribution made to the work of the United Nations in the political, economic, social and financial fields by the Member States who spoke that language.

6. Mr. HALL (United States of America) associating his delegation with the tributes of previous speakers to Arabic culture and scientific developments assumed that the Secretariat would not encounter any substantial difficulties if the draft resolution was adopted, and that a large portion of the costs involved could be absorbed in the existing budget. In that connexion he thought that the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions had been correct in considering the draft resolution from the purely budgetary point of view.

7. He had been particularly impressed by the argument of some speakers that the translation of certain documents into Arabic was particularly desirable for information purposes, especially in universities and

other academic institutions in Arabic-speaking countries, and would therefore support the joint draft resolution.

8. He thought that the Secretariat should not be too hasty in recruiting Arabic translators, and emphasized that the Secretary-General's proposal, which had been endorsed by the Advisory Committee, that consideration should be given to the use of contract services for some translation work might lead to substantial savings. Such possibilities should also be fully weighed in connexion with translations into the official languages of the United Nations.

9. Mr. BRAVO CARO (Mexico), speaking as a co-sponsor of the joint draft resolution, associated himself with the statements of previous speakers who had supported the resolution.

10. Mr. SILVA SUCRE (Venezuela), supporting the joint draft resolution, expressed his delegation's great sympathy with the request made by the Arabic-speaking Member States.

11. Mr. GIBSON (Liberia), speaking as a co-sponsor of the joint draft resolution, hoped that it would be supported by all members of the Fifth Committee. His delegation had sponsored the resolution in view of the strategic importance of the Arabic-speaking Member States in Europe, Africa and Asia, and because it felt that the provisions of rule 59 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly should be complied with.

12. Mr. ROUSSOS (Greece) said that his delegation was in favour of the proposal originated by the six Arab delegations and felt that the aim fully justified the expenditure involved. The Arabic language, which was the vehicle of a great civilization and a great religion, was increasing in importance in the world today. Many questions which were at issue in the United Nations affected the Arab States, and it was important that information about them should be relayed to the peoples of those States as well as to the diplomats and foreign offices.

13. The Advisory Committee had referred to the dangerous precedent which might be set if Arabic were raised to the status of an official language, but the proposal as it stood was far more limited in scope and the fairly modest expenditure involved did not warrant a decision on purely budgetary grounds. Further, the Greek delegation had been convinced by the representative of Syria that the work of translation into Arabic should be done within the Secretariat; "farming out" would inevitably lead to a lack of uniformity and costly revision would be necessary.

14. His delegation therefore wholeheartedly supported the joint draft resolution.

15. Mr. NATANAGARA (Indonesia) stressed the psychological importance to the United Nations of reaching the great Arab-speaking public and familiarizing it with its work. The population of Indonesia, for instance, was 90 per cent Moslem; Arabic was used in the universities and was familiar to the population through their reading of the Koran. Indonesia, for one, would strongly welcome the publication of important United Nations documents in Arabic.

16. The scope of the proposal was modest and the budgetary provision would be well spent; in any case, the cost involved represented only a small percentage of the sums saved through the reduction of the 1955 budget. The argument that the adoption of the proposal would greatly facilitate contact between the Arab-speaking delegations and their Governments was perfectly valid; it was difficult for those Governments adequately to instruct their delegations if they depended entirely on documents in other languages. His delegation would therefore urge the Committee to support the joint draft resolution.

17. Mr. STRAUCH (Brazil) offered his delegation's wholehearted support for the proposal to translate certain official documents into the Arabic language. Brazil had the closest and most friendly relations with the Arab States and owed to the Arab peoples—and especially to the Syrians and Lebanese living within its territory—a great debt of gratitude for their valuable contribution to its economic and cultural progress. The political and cultural advantages which the United Nations would gain from adoption of the proposal would far outweigh any financial or administrative drawbacks it might suffer. While believing, however, that a question of such importance should not be decided primarily on financial grounds, his delegation felt that budgetary considerations must not be altogether disregarded in the implementation of such a proposal. Indeed, if the resolution were adopted, he was confident that it would be put into effect in the most efficient and economical way possible, and would prove even more worthwhile in practice than it appeared in principle.

18. Mr. CLOUGH (United Kingdom) said that his delegation had noted the considerations upon which the Advisory Committee had based its decision not to recommend the adoption of the proposal, but in view of the fact that the volume of the documents published in Arabic was to be limited to some three or four thousand pages of English text a year, it was prepared to support the draft resolution. It would, however, strongly urge the adoption of the arrangements suggested by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 10 of document A/2671. The Syrian representative had reached the conclusion that the translation work involved should be done within the Secretariat by staff specially engaged for the purpose. The United Kingdom delegation felt, however, that the possibility of having the documents translated outside the Secretariat, under contractual arrangements or through the universities, should not be rejected without careful consideration.

19. Mr. KOSTIC (Yugoslavia) said that while the Advisory Committee's comments from the budgetary and administrative standpoints were understandable, the question was too important to be decided upon budgetary and administrative considerations alone. He would draw the Committee's attention to an aspect of it which had not so far been touched upon. Six Members of the United Nations had asked for the publication of some documents in Arabic, their mother tongue. They represented Arab-speaking countries, which covered a large area of the globe, where a national renaissance was in full swing. They were endeavouring to

reaffirm their place in the international community. It would be but a sign of goodwill to meet their request and the United Nations would be failing in its task if it did otherwise. Moreover, there was no doubt that agreement to the proposal would be of great moral and political support to those countries in attaining the goal they had set themselves. It had been said that the United Nations was as strong as its weakest Member; increasing the strength of the Arab countries would thus increase the strength of the Organization.

20. Those were the reasons which had prompted the Yugoslav delegation to become a co-sponsor of the joint draft resolution which, he hoped, would win the support of the whole Committee.

21. Mr. CAFIERO (Argentina) said that the representative of Uruguay had eloquently expressed the feeling of the Latin-American delegations in supporting the draft resolution of which Argentina was a co-sponsor. His delegation appreciated the objections raised by the Advisory Committee but felt that more was at stake than administrative and budgetary principles, namely, recognition by the United Nations of the existence of the Arab world.

22. He could not agree with the argument advanced by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 6 of its report: if the United Nations were to be truly universal, it should be catholic in its languages as in its membership. Again, the argument in paragraph 8 of the Advisory Committee's report was hardly convincing, for if Arabic translations were to be refused because there were radio programmes and Information Centre literature in Arabic, then the same argument might be applied to any one of the five official languages.

23. He therefore wholeheartedly supported the draft resolution and commended it to the Committee.

24. Mr. CUTTS (Australia) said that he too appreciated the important place of the language and culture of the Arabs in the history of civilization but he seriously doubted whether the proposal was wise from the practical viewpoint. He had been impressed by the comments of the Advisory Committee which had expressed concern at the considerable financial implications of the proposal, and while he agreed that the matter should not be decided primarily on administrative and budgetary grounds, those factors could not be disregarded. He shared the Advisory Committee's fear that the proposal, if approved, might set a precedent which could be invoked with equal validity by numerous other Members of the Organization whose national languages were not among the five official languages. Admittedly, the draft resolution provided that the volume of publication should not exceed a total of 4,000 pages of English text in any twelve-month period, but the figure had no particular merit. If the principle were approved, there would be no valid reason not to expand publication in future. The Norwegian representative had further brought out the drawbacks of the proposal.

25. As it was clear that the draft resolution had the support of the overwhelming majority of the Committee, he would not detract from the success of the proposal by voting against it, but for the reasons he had given he would abstain from voting. In so doing

he expressed the hope that the Advisory Committee's fears would prove completely groundless and that the proposal would not constitute a starting point for the submission of similar requests by other delegations or open the way for a wider volume of publication in Arabic. He urged the Secretary-General in carrying out the proposal to keep a close watch on the expenditure incurred.

26. Mr. CHAMANDI (Yemen), speaking as a co-sponsor of the draft resolution, expressed his delegation's appreciation of the arguments adduced by many members of the Committee in support of the proposal. He would add the further argument that the United Nations had been established to ensure the maintenance of peace and security in the world and to promote prosperity for all mankind, for peace and prosperity were not the monopoly of any one nation. If those aims were to be achieved, information on the results of United Nations activities were disseminated to the farthest corners of the earth. The draft resolution would ensure that the Arab peoples obtained that information. The benefit thus accruing to the United Nations from a fuller understanding of its work would far outweigh the monetary expenditure involved. He urged the Committee to give the draft resolution its unanimous support.

27. Mr. PACHACHI (Iraq), speaking on behalf of the six Arab States, expressed his gratitude for the tributes paid to the contribution of the Arab nations to human progress and world civilization. He had been glad to note that the proposal had received virtually unanimous support and he regretted that the Norwegian representative could not vote for the text. The Norwegian representative had pointed out that other nations had also contributed to world civilization. The Arab peoples were the first to agree on that point. In that connexion, he went on to show how other great civilizations had benefited from the Arab countries and how the latter, in their turn, had contributed to world culture. The Arab peoples were not, however, living in the shadows of the past. They had turned their faces to the future and having accepted many aspects of Western civilization, its technological achievements and its belief in progress, they were now going through a period of great changes.

28. The Arab peoples had unbounded faith in the United Nations, despite the reversals and disappointments they had suffered, for they firmly believed in world co-operation. They were also vitally interested in technical assistance, and they were entitled to know what the Organization was doing in matters of great concern to them. That alone would sufficiently justify the proposal.

29. The question was not one of prestige, as the Norwegian representative had suggested, but one of need, the need of the Arab peoples. Although English might be widely understood in the Scandinavian countries which enjoyed a high level of civilization, in the Arab nations Arabic was frequently the only language which the people knew.

30. The objection that the proposal might constitute a precedent was not valid. Rule 59 of the General Assembly's rules of procedure had already envisaged such a precedent and the Fifth Committee could not

invalidate a principle endorsed by the General Assembly. The only objection which might be raised was that the proposal was inopportune. Surely, however, the United Nations would be justified in assuming the slight additional expenditure, particularly in view of the savings made in the 1955 budget estimates.

31. Lastly, the Advisory Committee's argument that considerable information concerning the United Nations was provided to non-official circles in the form of radio programmes and by the distribution of material by the Cairo Information Centre was equally invalid. The amount of information obtained through those channels was inadequate to satisfy the requirements for information about the United Nations of persons in the Arab-speaking world who were not conversant with any of the official languages of the United Nations. For all those reasons he disagreed with the Advisory Committee's position.

32. Mr. CHECHETKIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that he had listened attentively to the statements made in support of the draft resolution and could understand the reasons which had led its sponsors to submit the proposal, for the Arab language had contributed much to world culture and civilization. He had also been impressed, however, by the Advisory Committee's cogent arguments and in the circumstances he would abstain from voting on the proposal.

33. Mr. GANEM (France) said that his delegation could understand the Advisory Committee's objections to the proposal which had been further developed by the Norwegian representative. Despite the optimism of many delegations and the discretion displayed by many Member States which had not put forward a similar proposal for the translation of documents into their national languages, the Committee's action in adopting the resolution would constitute a precedent from the moral if not the legal standpoint. If other States were admitted to membership in the United Nations they too might invoke rule 59 in future and the Committee would be unable to raise any serious objections to their request.

34. His delegation was equally aware of the difficult task which would confront the Secretary-General in giving effect to the resolution particularly when he attempted to decide on the form of Arabic to be used in United Nations documents.

35. However, his delegation had not forgotten France's centuries-old tradition of friendship with the Arab countries. After briefly reviewing the ties which had existed between France and the Arab world since the Crusades, he showed how France had consistently encouraged the study of Arabic and of Arab culture. In view of those ties, his delegation would give its full support to the draft resolution.

36. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to vote on the joint draft resolution (A/C.5/L.294).

At the request of the representative of Argentina, a vote was taken by roll call.

Panama, having been drawn by lot by the Chairman, was called upon to vote first.

In favour: Panama, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Thailand, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain

and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Burma, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Cuba, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, France, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Liberia, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan.

Against: Sweden, Norway.

Abstaining: Poland, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of South Africa, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Australia, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Czechoslovakia, Israel.

The draft resolution was approved by 42 votes to 2, with 8 abstentions.

AGENDA ITEM 38

Budget estimates for the financial year 1955 (A/2647 and Add.1, A/2688, A/C.5/580, A/C.5/581, A/C.5/604) (continued)

PERMANENT HEADQUARTERS OF INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION AND WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION IN GENEVA

37. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/604) dealing with the permanent headquarters of the International Telecommunications Union and the World Meteorological Organization in Geneva. The Secretary-General wished to seek the General Assembly's assurance that it would, in principle, be prepared at its tenth session to approve expenditures for the erection on United Nations grounds in Geneva of a building or buildings to accommodate the headquarters of those two organizations. His principal purpose in raising the question at the present juncture, when the exact cost and other facts were unknown, was to secure consideration of a matter in which both the Advisory Committee and the General Assembly had repeatedly expressed keen interest before certain developments now pending reached an irrevocable stage.

38. The Committee would probably wish to have the views of the Advisory Committee on that report before considering it.

39. Mr. AGHNIDES (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee would willingly examine the Secretary-General's report on that item. The Committee had in fact already been consulted informally and had concluded that the question was important enough to be considered by the Fifth Committee at the present session, especially as decisions which might prove irrevocable might otherwise be taken after the close of the session.

40. The CHAIRMAN proposed that the report should be submitted to the Advisory Committee for consideration.

It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 46

United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (*concluded*):

- (a) Annual report of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board (A/2659) (*concluded*)
- (b) Acceptance by the specialized agencies of the jurisdiction of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal in matters involving applications alleging non-observance of the regulations of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund: report of the Secretary-General (A/2749 and Add.1) (*concluded*)
- (c) Admission of staff members of the Interim Commission for the International Trade Organization to membership in the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund: report of

the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board (A/2664) (*concluded*)

- (d) Revision of the administrative rules of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund: report of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board (A/2690) (*concluded*)

CONSIDERATION OF THE DRAFT REPORT OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (A/C.5/L.299)

41. The CHAIRMAN drew the attention of the members to the Committee's draft report on the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (A/C.5/L.299).

The report was adopted unanimously.

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.