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Chairman: Mr. Ismael THAJEB (Indonesia).

Organization of the work of the Second Committee at future sessions of the General Assembly (A/C.2/222)

1. The CHAIRMAN introduced his note on the organization of the Committee's work at future sessions of the General Assembly (A/C.2/222). He had taken that initiative in full accord with Assembly resolution 1898 (XVIII), particularly the first and fourth paragraphs of the preamble. Of course, the Committee could take no decision which would be binding on future sessions, but he hoped that a frank exchange of views would be useful.

2. Mr. HIREMATH (India) said his delegation saw certain advantages in the general debate but had an open mind as regards its discontinuance. It would be willing to consider the first of the suggestions made in the Chairman's note at an appropriate time. The best procedure might be to limit the general debate to two weeks, with each representative speaking for fifteen or twenty minutes. The Chairman's second suggestion was a logical consequence of the first. The only snag was that delegations might find it difficult to put forward proposals on specific items early in the session. The Committee might open its session with statements by the Chairman, the Under-Secretary for Economic and Social Affairs, the Commissioner for Technical Assistance, the Executive Chairman of TAB, the Managing Director of the Special Fund and the Commissioner for Industrial Development, after which it might adjourn for a short time to allow informal consultations between representatives. Subsequently, the Committee might allocate items to certain meetings and, by setting deadlines for the submission of draft resolutions, by prompt closure of the list of speakers and by the timely submission of amendments, might organize its business in a more orderly fashion.

3. Mr. CHOCRON (Venezuela) supported all of the suggestions made by the Chairman except the fourth. The deadlines for the submission of proposals must be flexible; at the current session, the time allowed had often been too short.

4. Mr. VELAZQUEZ MUÑOZ (Panama) also supported all of the Chairman's suggestions. It had been asserted that four or five weeks of general debate had enabled representatives to hold informal discussions, but attendance in the Committee twice a day and study

of the necessary documents had left his delegation little time for such consultations. Many of the statements made during the general debate had been for home consumption. It would be better to discontinue the general debate and to hold only one meeting a day. Informal discussions between meetings would obviate the need for adjourning debate on certain draft resolutions to allow the sponsors to confer. It would still be possible to discuss in a general way the topics raised in the report of the Economic and Social Council.

5. U MAUNG MAUNG (Burma) was glad to support the Chairman's suggestions. With the increase in membership, the general debate had become too long and the points made were often repeated during the discussion of draft resolutions, while important items were often dispatched with undue haste at the end of the session. It would be far better to include general economic statements in the speeches made in plenary meeting. Since the initial speakers in the Assembly were usually the most important members of their delegations, such statements would carry greater weight. The Panamanian suggestion that the Committee should hold only one meeting a day would enable members to attend more plenary meetings and also to hold more consultations for the drafting of resolutions.

6. Mr. GHEBEH (Syria) whole-heartedly supported the Chairman's suggestions, particularly that for the discontinuance of the general debate. At the same time, he hoped that flexibility would be observed in allowing free expression of views, that related subjects would be taken up together and that enough time would be given to representatives to prepare draft resolutions, study documents, introduce amendments and comment on all those texts.

7. Mr. CVOROVIC (Yugoslavia) thought that the time had come for the Committee to re-examine its methods of work. That did not mean that the procedure so far followed had been unsuitable; the methods adopted had kept pace with the diversification of the Committee's activities and the increase in its membership. The general debate had proved useful in identifying problems and promoting agreement on the importance of various factors in economic development. However, a new stage had been reached, at which the United Nations should take concrete measures to solve the various clearly defined problems. Since the nature of its work had changed, the Committee should change its methods of work.

8. If the tendency for delegations to express their principal ideas on economic and social problems in plenary meetings continued, a general debate in the Committee would be repetitive. Economic development had become one of the most important topics in the United Nations, and it was natural that the General Assembly should devote appropriate attention to it. If the general debate in the Committee was abolished, it

must be decided whether the Committee could start to consider the specific items on its agenda before the conclusion of the general debate in the plenary meetings. In addition, it would be essential for the Committee to give priority to the most important items on its agenda.

9. One solution might be for the Committee to have a general exchange of views on the operational aspects of United Nations work as reflected in the report of the Economic and Social Council. That would be a logical and necessary complement to the general debate in plenary. If the study of the Council's report was left until the end of the session, only certain aspects of the report would still remain for discussion, since the others would have been covered by the debates on specific topics. All other organizational matters were subordinate to the two main issues of how the debate in the Committee could supplement and not duplicate the debate in plenary and what should be the role of the report of the Council in the Committee's deliberations.

10. Mr. BOLT (New Zealand) said that the time was ripe for some organizational changes, which should enable the Committee to dispatch its business more expeditiously.

11. The reservations expressed by the Indian representative might be covered if it was remembered that the general debate would not be abolished but merely transferred to the plenary Assembly, which was the most appropriate forum wherein high-ranking officials in delegations, who could not stay for the whole of the session, made their general statements. His delegation supported the Indian representative's suggestion that the Committee should start by hearing statements by officials of the Secretariat. Officials of the specialized agencies might also be heard. The allocation of meetings and fixing of deadlines, mentioned in the fourth suggestion by the Chairman, about which the Venezuelan representative had expressed misgivings, would be a tentative but nevertheless valuable arrangement.

12. The value of the general debate as a period of consultation was greater for larger delegations than for smaller ones, whose members were often unable to absent themselves from the meetings for consultations. He agreed with the representative of Panama that it would be preferable to hold only one meeting each day. The remarks made by the representative of Burma confirmed the views of the New Zealand delegation on the subject of the general debate. The transfer of the general debate from the Committee to the plenary Assembly would leave representatives more time to attend the latter's meetings.

13. The question of the treatment to be given to the report of the Economic and Social Council in the Committee's discussions would depend on the result of the efforts to make the Council more representative. The task of listing items in the agenda in the order in which they were most likely to be taken up would devolve in the first instance upon the Secretariat. Before the opening of the session, the Secretariat could contact the permanent missions and consult those delegations which were likely to make proposals on specific subjects. It would then be possible to draw up a list of items in a suitable order.

14. Although there were good reasons for aiming at as wide a geographical representation as possible among the sponsors of draft resolutions, there was

growing recognition of the procedural difficulties involved when a number of delegations sponsored a text. Those difficulties should be remembered at the beginning of the next session. It should also be remembered that a draft resolution was the property of its sponsors until its adoption by the Committee. The procedure whereby delegations announced publicly their intention of joining the sponsors was to be avoided.

15. Mr. TRAORE (Mali) noted that a general debate of some kind was necessary but that the existing procedure was sometimes repetitive. One solution would be for one country to speak on behalf of several others. The other solution suggested by the Chairman, which his delegation supported, was for delegations to make their general statements of economic policy in plenary meeting. The debate in committee should concentrate on more specific topics and relate to the operational programmes of the United Nations. A comprehensive study would show what had been achieved and what possibilities there were for further action.

16. The Committee's agenda should consist, not of general topics, but of specific items relating to methods of solving economic problems. However, resolutions on general topics might give rise to a general exchange of views. Since consultations between sponsors often prevented some representatives from attending meetings of the Committee, his delegation supported the suggestion that there should be only one meeting each day. In addition, once a draft resolution was introduced, there was no need for all its sponsors to take part in the debate. They should be represented by one spokesman.

17. In the main, his delegation supported the suggestions contained in the note by the Chairman.

18. Mr. BRILLANTES (Philippines) endorsed all the suggestions made by the Chairman. A time-limit of fifteen minutes for interventions might be useful. However, the question was not so much the length of speeches as their substance and nature. In future, the debate in committee should be centred on specific topics. The Committee should decide whether the agreement reached regarding the future organization of work should be embodied in a resolution or reflected in detail in its report.

19. With regard to the remarks of the New Zealand representative concerning the procedural difficulties involved when several delegations sponsored a draft resolution, it would be unwise to limit the number of sponsors. Members came from different parts of the world, and his delegation believed that joint sponsorship of draft resolutions promoted greater agreement and expedited the Committee's work. In that connexion, he recalled that the draft resolution on the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (A/C.2/L.729) had been submitted with an annexed joint declaration in which the sponsors had explained their views and the purpose of the draft resolution. That practice might well be continued whenever a number of delegations sponsored the same text.

20. The services of the Committee officers should be more fully utilized. They could assist even more than in the past in the preparation of draft resolutions, in the submission of written and oral amendments and in reconciling different points of view.

21. Mr. COSIO VILLEGAS (Mexico) said that there was a need for radical changes if the United Nations

was to attain its objectives. The President of the Assembly's seventeenth session, as well as the President of the current session, had been congratulated for endeavouring to ensure that plenary meetings began on time. It was impossible to begin on time if delegations were not present, and the methods of work could not be improved without a change in the attitude of delegations. Meetings of United Nations bodies often began half an hour or more late.

22. The Chairman should have greater moral authority to conduct the Committee's business. With regard to the Chairman's first suggestion, he felt that it should have been made clear to what extent statements made in the general debate at plenary meetings should set forth the principal views of delegations on economic and social problems. His delegation considered that it was a good idea to discontinue the general debate in the Second Committee and agreed that attention should be focused on specific topics on which there would be detailed discussions.

23. The Chairman had also suggested that the Committee should, at the beginning of each session, determine the final order of the agenda items to be considered by the Committee. However, that order should be based on the importance of the items. For example, at the nineteenth session, the results of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development would undoubtedly be evaluated and the Committee would have to decide on the steps that the General Assembly should take to follow up the important work begun at the Conference. The general debate should be discontinued, since it took up four or five weeks and left little time for individual items. In the past, specific topics had been examined in connexion with draft resolutions and the Committee had thus been able to save time.

24. His delegation supported all the suggestions contained in the Chairman's note.

25. Mr. CUBILLOS (Chile) said that the Chairman's note reflected the concern expressed by various dele-

gations during the General Assembly session. The crux of the matter was whether there was a need to discontinue the general debate in committee. Although many of the general statements made were repetitive, rather than discontinuing the general debate, some way should be found to change the nature of the debate, either by limiting the number of speakers or the length of interventions or by means of memoranda in which delegations set forth their views. Other delegations could then refer to those memoranda. Another solution would be to combine the Chairman's first two suggestions; representatives could also dwell at greater length on specific topics. His delegation agreed with the Chairman's second and fourth suggestions.

26. The CHAIRMAN read out a letter he had received from the President of the General Assembly in which the latter expressed his appreciation for the initiative he had taken and added that such initiatives contributed much to improving the methods of work of the Assembly. The President commended the Chairman's suggestions to the attention of Members and pointed out that, while they in no way limited the right of delegations to a full and free expression of views coming within the purview of the Second Committee, they provided for the avoidance of repetition by such measures as the discontinuance of the general debate, an orderly plan of work laid down in advance, allocating the number of meetings for items and setting deadlines for the submission of proposals; those measures would greatly expedite the work of the Second Committee and the other main committees of the Assembly. Since the provisional grouping of items in the order in which they would be most likely considered was a matter initially within the purview of the Secretary-General, who submitted a provisional list to the General Committee, the President had transmitted his letter and the Chairman's note to the Secretary-General.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.