

United Nations
**GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**

TWENTY-SEVENTH SESSION

Official Records



**SECOND COMMITTEE, 1487th
MEETING**

Friday, 10 November 1972,
at 11.15 a.m.

NEW YORK

Chairman: Mr. Bruce RANKIN (Canada).

AGENDA ITEM 47

United Nations Conference on the Human Environment: report of the Secretary-General (*continued*)* (A/8688, A/8691, A/8703/Add.1 (Part II), A/8783 and Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1 and Add.2; A/C.2/277; A/C.2/L.1246/Rev.1, A/C.2/L.1247, A/C.2/L.1249-1251, A/C.2/L.1254, A/C.2/L.1255)

1. The CHAIRMAN invited comments on the statements on the administrative and financial implications of the respective sites proposed for the environment secretariat (A/8783/Add.2; A/C.2/L.1254 and A/C.2/L.1255).
2. Mr. McCARTHY (United Kingdom) inquired whether the last sentence of paragraph 4 in document A/8783/Add.2 referred to cases where the range of the relevant contributions remained to be negotiated or to stated offers of contributions, and whether the annexed table was expressed in net or in gross figures.
3. Mr. SADDLER (Office of Financial Services) said that the figures had been calculated on a gross basis without taking into account contributions to be negotiated with host Governments.
4. Mr. ZAGORIN (United States of America) recalled that his delegation had already stressed the need for a statement of financial implications in order to be able to take a decision on the site of the environment secretariat in accordance with rule 155 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and to have some basis for evaluation in selecting the site. Furthermore, his delegation had stated that effectiveness and economy constituted essential criteria in the selection of the site and had concluded that United Nations Headquarters in New York or Geneva would be the most suitable place for the environment secretariat. The statements of financial implications now before the Second Committee provided good bases for comparing operating costs at the various sites, and the figures of approximately \$2,300,000 for Nairobi and \$1,300,000 for Geneva fully bore out his delegation's view that the environment secretariat should be located either in New York or in Geneva and that other sites would prove appreciably more expensive. His delegation felt that the Committee should select the most effective and least expensive site and should not disregard the financial considerations involved. It considered that the comparative cost figures confirmed his

delegation's view that the new environment secretariat ought to be located in one of the existing United Nations headquarters.

5. Mr. KARUNATILLEKE (Sri Lanka) felt that it was essential to distinguish between short-term and long-term costs. In his view, costs in Geneva, New York and Vienna were low because infrastructure already existed. However, an estimate over a period of five or six years would show a marked reduction in costs for locations where there were no United Nations offices at present.
6. Mr. ODERO-JOWI (Kenya) said, in connexion with the comment by the representative of Sri Lanka, that Nairobi would prove less expensive than other locations in the long run. He agreed that the cost of setting up a secretariat would be high at first, because it was a new site. However, the United Nations must remedy the omissions of the past by creating new facilities and setting up new United Nations bodies in the developing countries and transferring technology to them. For that reason, his delegation insisted that the decision on the location of the environment secretariat must be based on political rather than financial considerations.
7. Mr. McCARTHY (United Kingdom) felt that low costs should not necessarily be regarded as a decisive consideration. However, the establishment of the new body had been worked out on the assumption that it was part of the United Nations family, would have to rely on existing services, and would need to be near related organizations. In the light of the statements of financial implications before the Committee, his delegation felt that it would be a mistake to locate the environment secretariat, which was at no time intended to be a self-contained unit, far from other units with which it would have to be in close and constant contact.
8. The objective of the amendments proposed by his delegation in A/C.2/L.1250 was to leave the Committee and the General Assembly a free choice among the respective locations and to enable the General Assembly to take a decision by means of a free ballot. Finally, his delegation assumed that the environment secretariat would only be set up subject to the conclusion of a satisfactory headquarters agreement.
9. Mr. DRISS (Tunisia) felt that although the question of financial implications should be considered in the Second Committee, it was for the Fifth Committee to discuss them in depth. His delegation would like

* Resumed from the 1483rd meeting.

to know how the Secretariat had been able to assess the financial implications of location in Nairobi without a visit, as suggested in paragraph 4 of A/C.2/L.1254. In the view of his delegation, the Secretariat had not so far produced a reliable document on financial implications.

10. Mr. ISAKSEN (Denmark) noted that the almost unanimous agreement recently reached on the draft resolution on institutional and financial arrangements (A/C.2/L.1228) had not, unfortunately, been duplicated on the question of the location of the environment secretariat.

11. His delegation was opposed to locating United Nations bodies or agencies in accordance with the principle of equitable geographical distribution because it felt that, apart from financial considerations, the only other valid criterion to be taken into account was the efficient performance of functions for the benefit of all Members of the United Nations, developing as well as developed countries. For that reason, Denmark generally preferred new secretariat units to be located at one of the principal offices of the United Nations, and in the present case Geneva appeared to be the most suitable choice since many of the organizations with which the secretariat would have to be in almost daily contact were located in or near Geneva. Locations outside main offices normally involved higher administrative costs and that factor had to be taken into consideration, particularly in the current financial crisis.

12. On the other hand, Denmark appreciated the desire of the developing countries to see units of the United Nations family established in the developing world and, within reasonable limits, it did not consider higher costs to be a decisive obstacle to transferring to developing countries secretariat units which could perform their functions without being in close contact with other organs. It could therefore accept the proposal in the draft resolution submitted by Finland, the Netherlands and Sweden (A/C.2/L.1249) to postpone the decision on the location of the environment secretariat until the possibility of locating certain units in developing countries had been examined in depth.

13. Denmark was not able, however, to support the proposal in draft resolution A/C.2/L.1246/Rev.1 to locate the environment secretariat in Nairobi. Its objections, however, were not based on the fact that Kenya was a developing country; it preferred Geneva because it was of overriding importance for the environment secretariat to be located in a place where it would be most likely to fulfil its task of co-ordinating programmes and advising intergovernmental bodies within the United Nations system.

14. Mr. FALL (Senegal) did not feel that financial considerations should constitute a priority factor in the choice of the site of the environment secretariat. If costs were of paramount importance, no United Nations unit would leave New York. He agreed with the Kenyan representative that what was needed was a political decision because a financial decision based

on financial considerations would mean that no United Nations unit would be located in a developing country. Therefore, the Second Committee should take a political decision without delay to locate the new secretariat in Nairobi.

15. Mr. SANTA CRUZ (Chile) agreed that financial implications would have to be discussed in detail in the Fifth Committee. However, he found it somewhat curious that in document A/8783/Add.2 estimated costs for Vienna and New York were lower than for Madrid and less than half those estimated for Nairobi, especially since office space in New York would have to be rented outside the Headquarters building.

16. Mr. KANÉ (Mauritania) felt that the candidacy of Kenya was a test of the solidarity of the Group of 77 and of the future of the United Nations itself, because in the past the selection of the location of United Nations units had been based exclusively on financial considerations. His delegation was aware that it would be initially more expensive to locate the environment secretariat in Nairobi but felt that the decision to be taken was essentially a political decision.

17. Mr. WALDRON-RAMSEY (Barbados) said that he was pleased that the Office of Financial Services had been able to prepare the statement of financial implications within a reasonable period of time.

18. The statements of some developed countries at the current meeting indicated that, for political reasons, they clearly did not wish to locate the environment secretariat in Kenya or any other developing country. That was not novel behaviour on their part. The same arguments had been raised with regard to the location of the UNCTAD and UNIDO secretariats; in both cases, a secret ballot had been taken—the wrong procedure, in his delegation's view—after developed countries had used their influence to manipulate the wishes of certain developing countries, with the result that UNCTAD had been established at Geneva and UNIDO at Vienna. The style or efficacy of performance of a secretariat located at Nairobi would not necessarily be inferior to one located in a developed country.

19. The language in the preamble to draft resolution A/C.2/L.1249 and that used by the representative of Denmark at the current meeting was unsufferably condescending. He failed to understand how a representative could state that Geneva and New York were focal points of international activity and then go on to say that he supported the idea of moving secretariat units to developing countries.

20. The United Nations had a wide span of representation, and that fact must be reflected in the location of its offices. It was no longer acceptable to claim that reasons of efficiency and cost should preclude their being situated in developing countries. Draft resolution A/C.2/L.1246/Rev.1 must be put to the vote in accordance with the standard procedure; a secret ballot would be inappropriate. The Committee must take a bold political decision. The debate had shown

that the developed countries did not wish to help the developing countries, which must rally together, to extricate themselves from the labyrinth of underdevelopment. He hoped that those developed countries which had announced at Stockholm that they would make sizable contributions to the Environment Fund would honour their pledges.

21. Mr. AL-EBRAHIM (Kuwait) rejected all the arguments raised by some developed countries, as he considered them based on self-interest. Their attitude was not unusual. The developed countries should respect the principle of universality enshrined in the United Nations Charter. It was time that the secretariat of a United Nations body was established in a developing country. The argument that the cost would be excessive was inadmissible. He agreed with the representative of Mauritania that the Committee should vote immediately on draft resolution A/C.2/L.1246/Rev.1.

22. Mr. MUELLER (Austria) wished to make it clear that the fact that Austria had offered to serve as host country to the environment secretariat did not mean that it was opposed to the candidature of any other Government. However, the arguments mentioned in favour of Geneva were even more valid in the case of Vienna, since contacts would be facilitated by the presence there of IAEA, UNIDO, and the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis.

23. Mr. VERCELES (Philippines) said that his Government would prefer the environment secretariat to be located in a city where a United Nations office already existed, for reasons of co-ordination and efficiency, or where the Philippines maintained a diplomatic presence, in view of restrictions which his Government had been compelled, owing to natural disasters, to impose on travel expenditure.

24. However, his delegation was prepared to join in a political decision reflecting the overwhelming sentiment of the developing countries and would therefore vote in favour of draft resolution A/C.2/L.1246/Rev.1.

25. Mr. ISAKSEN (Denmark), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he had not stated, as the representative of Barbados had asserted, that his own delegation did not wish the environment secretariat to be located at Nairobi because Kenya was a developing country. On the contrary, his delegation was not opposed to moving certain secretariat units to developing countries. The question was not one of developed versus developing countries. His delegation preferred Geneva because of the importance of the task of the environment secretariat, which should be a focal point for co-ordinating environmental activities.

26. Mr. STAVROPOULOS (Legal Counsel), referring to the remarks of the United Kingdom representative, said that headquarters agreements were concluded after the site for the organization in question had been selected.

27. Mr. SADDLER (Office of Financial Services), replying to the representative of Tunisia, said that in

order to prepare the statement of financial implications, the Secretary-General could have sent a representative to Nairobi from Headquarters to study the situation on the spot; he could also have dispatched a representative from another location to make such a study. However, the Secretary-General had selected a third course of action: he had sent a questionnaire to the various countries which had offered to host the environment secretariat. The questionnaire had been carefully studied by knowledgeable Secretariat experts, who had subsequently prepared the statement of financial implications.

28. Referring to the Chilean representative's remarks, he said that the general expenses for New York included \$55,000 for the rental of premises; additional costs such as those relating to communications, pouch facilities, maintenance of premises and conference facilities were what accounted for the fact that the level of general expenses would be so much higher if the environment secretariat were located in Nairobi instead of New York.

29. Mr. DRISS (Tunisia) moved the closure of the debate under rule 119 of the rules of procedure.

30. He also proposed that all draft resolutions and amendments should be withdrawn and that the Committee should decide by consensus to locate the environment secretariat at Nairobi. It would be divisive to take a vote.

31. The CHAIRMAN said that the debate on financial implications had in fact been concluded, since no further representative had asked to speak on that aspect of the matter. He appreciated the effort of the Tunisian representative; however, given the course which the proceedings had followed, the Committee could not take a decision by consensus.

32. Mr. McCARTHY (United Kingdom) said that he appreciated the spirit behind the Tunisian representative's proposal. However, in the light of the debate, it would be a fiction to pretend that there was a consensus.

33. Mr. ODERO-JOWI (Kenya) requested a roll-call vote on draft resolution A/C.2/L.1246/Rev.1.

34. Mr. McCARTHY (United Kingdom) requested a recorded vote on all the amendments and draft resolutions before the Committee.

35. Mr. RUIZ MORALES (Spain), replying to a question from the Chairman, said that his delegation withdrew its request that priority should be given to the motion it had made at the 1483rd meeting.

36. Mr. VAN GORKOM (Netherlands), recalling his statement at the 1483rd meeting, said that the proposal in draft resolution A/C.2/L.1249 had been submitted in good faith in a sincere effort to reach a reasonable, if temporary, solution to the question of location of the environment secretariat.

37. In the light of the debate, the sponsors had now decided to withdraw the draft resolution, while reserving the right to submit it in due course in the appropriate form, forum and context.

38. Mr. BELLIZZI (Malta) said that he withdrew his delegation's amendment contained in document A/C.2/L.1247 relating to the fifth preambular paragraph of draft resolution A/C.2/L.1246, which in its view involved a principle of such significance that it should properly have formed a separate resolution and warranted exhaustive debate in a more appropriate context.

39. His delegation concurred in the Chairman's ruling that the Netherlands proposal should be considered as a new proposal rather than as an amendment. In his view, the same logic led to the conclusion that some parts of the preamble of the draft resolution remaining before the Committee (A/C.2/L.1246/Rev.1) were equally misplaced.

40. His delegation's reservations related solely to the preamble rather than to the objective sought. In view of recent developments and consultations regarding the site of the environment secretariat Malta, in a spirit of solidarity with the developing world, withdrew its candidacy in the hope of facilitating the selection of a site. His country remained keenly interested in the cause of the environment and hoped that, if regional environmental centres were to be developed in the future, Malta would be considered for a Mediterranean regional centre.

41. Mr. JOSEPH (Australia) wished, before the vote on draft resolution A/C.2/L.1246/Rev.1, to submit a minor amendment to the fifth preambular paragraph which might preclude the necessity of a vote against the draft resolution by his delegation and others. Specifically he proposed the insertion of the words "*inter alia*" following the word "located" in that preambular paragraph.

42. His delegation would respect the will of the majority on the question before the Committee and noted that Australia's commitment to the Environment Fund would be honoured no matter where the environment secretariat was located.

43. The CHAIRMAN asked if any of the co-sponsors of the draft resolution objected to the oral amendment submitted by the Australian delegation.

44. In the absence of objection, he took it that the oral amendment submitted by Australia was acceptable and the draft resolution could be regarded as revised accordingly.

45. Mr. VERCELES (Philippines) said that the Australian amendment might more appropriately be placed after the words "having regard" in the fifth preambular paragraph.

It was so agreed.

46. Mr. JANKOWITSCH (Austria) said, in explanation of vote, that his Government's offer of a site had

not been intended to create dissension. At the current stage, without agreeing to every point made and while reserving his delegation's position, he expressed the view that the appeals for a broadly-based decision should be given careful consideration. His delegation did not wish its offer to stand in the way of a broadly-based decision by the Committee.

47. Mr. FALL (Senegal) wondered whether the Committee could properly take the action recommended in the United Kingdom amendment (A/C.2/L.1250).

48. Mr. McCARTHY (United Kingdom) said that it was his delegation's understanding that any recommendation of the Committee was, in fact, a recommendation of the General Assembly. The United Kingdom proposal called for a ballot by the General Assembly at a plenary meeting.

49. The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the Second Committee was one of the Main Committees of the General Assembly.

50. Mr. STAVROPOULOS (Legal Counsel) agreed with the Chairman's understanding and said that the item had been referred to the Second Committee, which was asked to make recommendations on the subject to the plenary General Assembly. The United Kingdom amendment represented a possible method which the Committee could recommend to the plenary General Assembly.

51. Mr. WALDRON-RAMSEY (Barbados) suggested that the Committee should proceed immediately to the vote and that further explanations of vote should be given afterwards.

52. The CHAIRMAN said that, in the absence of objection, he would invite the Committee to proceed to the vote.

A recorded vote was taken on the Tunisian amendment contained in document A/C.2/L.1251.

In favour: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Honduras, Iceland, Italy, Khmer Republic, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Tunisia, Turkey, United States of America.

Against: Afghanistan, Albania, Argentina, Bahrain, Barbados, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Dahomey, Democratic Yemen, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Laos, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libyan Arab Republic, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Upper Volta, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zaire, Zambia.

Abstaining: Algeria, Austria, Bulgaria, Burma, Burundi, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Congo, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Dominican Republic, Fiji, Guatemala, Guinea, Hungary, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Ivory Coast, Japan, Malawi, Malaysia, Mongolia, Morocco, Pakistan, Panama, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The Tunisian amendments were rejected by 68 votes to 20, with 35 abstentions.

A recorded vote was taken on the United Kingdom amendments contained in document A/C.2/L.1250.

In favour: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Costa Rica, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Mongolia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

Against: Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Bahrain, Barbados, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Burma, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Cyprus, Dahomey, Democratic Yemen, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Ivory Coast, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Khmer Republic, Kuwait, Laos, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libyan Arab Republic, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Upper Volta, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zaire, Zambia.

Abstaining: Bulgaria, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Fiji, Iran, Israel, Malawi, Malaysia, Malta, Romania, Singapore.

The United Kingdom amendments were rejected by 81 votes to 30, with 12 abstentions.

At the request of the representative of Cuba, a recorded vote was taken on the operative part of draft resolution A/C.2/L.1246/Rev.1.

In favour: Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Bahrain, Barbados, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Burma, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Dahomey, Democratic Yemen, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea,

Guyana, Honduras, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Ivory Coast, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Khmer Republic, Kuwait, Laos, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libyan Arab Republic, Madagascar, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Romania, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Upper Volta, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zaire, Zambia.

Against: United States of America.

Abstaining: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Fiji, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Mongolia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The operative part of draft resolution A/C.2/L.1246/Rev.1 was adopted by 93 votes to 1, with 30 abstentions.

53. The CHAIRMAN said that the request for a roll-call vote on the draft resolution as a whole had been withdrawn by the representative of Kenya.

A recorded vote was taken on draft resolution A/C.2/L.1246/Rev.1 as a whole, as orally revised.

In favour: Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Bahrain, Barbados, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Burma, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Dahomey, Democratic Yemen, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Ivory Coast, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Khmer Republic, Kuwait, Laos, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libyan Arab Republic, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Romania, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Upper Volta, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zaire, Zambia.

Against: None.

Abstaining: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Canada, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Fiji, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Mongolia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway,

Poland, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

The draft resolution as a whole, as orally revised, was adopted by 93 votes to none, with 31 abstentions.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.