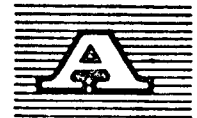


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Agenda items 83 and 26

PUBLICATIONS AND DOCUMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
RATIONALIZATION OF THE PROCEDURES AND ORGANIZATION OF  
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Report of the Fifth Committee (part I)

Rapporteur: Mr. Babooram RAMBISSOON (Trinidad and Tobago)

1. The Fifth Committee has considered the question of publications and documentation of the United Nations on the basis of the following documents.<sup>1/</sup>

(a) A report of the Joint Inspection Unit on United Nations documentation and on the organization of the proceedings of the General Assembly and its main bodies (A/8319 and Corr.1) and the related comments of the Secretary-General (A/8488);

(b) Section IX, entitled "Documentation", of the report of the Special Committee on the Rationalization of the Procedures and Organization of the General Assembly (A/8426), referred to the Fifth Committee by the General Assembly;

(c) A report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/8532 and Corr.1 and 2).

The subject was considered at the 1469th to the 1473rd meetings of the Committee, held from 2 to 6 December 1971; the views expressed by delegations and statements

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<sup>1/</sup> Pursuant to provisions of General Assembly resolution 2538 (XXIV) of 11 December 1969, the Secretary-General had also submitted a report to the General Assembly at its twenty-fifth session (A/8126) giving information on the implementation of that resolution. The General Assembly decided, by its resolution 2732 (XXV) of 16 December 1970, to defer to the twenty-sixth session its consideration of the subject and requested the Secretary-General to provide any additional information he deemed appropriate; this was done in a further report (A/8437).

made by the Chairman of the Advisory Committee and representatives of the Secretary-General are reflected in the summary records of those meetings.

2. In the course of the discussion, the concern which had been expressed at previous sessions of the Committee at the volume of documentation of the United Nations was reiterated. Apart from the question of cost, the sheer bulk of the documentation, often received too late for serious study by the Member States, sometimes detracted from the efficiency and effectiveness of the work of the Organization. The report of the Joint Inspection Unit, and the translation of the Unit's recommendations into a draft resolution presented by the Advisory Committee, offered an opportunity to give more precision to the efforts to control and limit documentation which had been reflected in previous resolutions adopted by the General Assembly on this subject. The Secretary-General had indicated his willingness to institute a quota system for documentation and to attempt in 1972, through the administration of that system, to reduce documentation (other than meetings records) under his control by 15 per cent in comparison with its volume in 1970; he should be encouraged in this effort. On the other hand, as the Secretary-General had pointed out, the establishment of the quotas and the administration of the system would have to give full weight to varying priorities, and care would have to be taken not to approach the operation in such a mechanistic manner that the implementation of essential work programmes would be hampered.

3. While, in the spirit expressed above, there was general agreement that the Secretary-General should attempt to achieve the 15 per cent reduction described, there was some question as to whether the 1972 provisions for the costs of documentation should be reduced by \$1.25 million, as recommended by the Advisory Committee. Such a reduction was an objective since the success of the efforts of the Secretary-General remained to be seen. It was also suggested that the propriety of making such a global reduction, which would affect sections of the budget already approved by the Fifth Committee in first reading, was questionable. On the other hand, the Joint Inspection Unit had indicated that a 15 per cent reduction in total documentation might be expected to yield a saving of \$4.5 million; the present proposal was more modest, but would contribute a meaningful incentive to the Secretary-General - and to the representatives of Member States whose co-operation would be indispensable - for achieving the reduction in documentation generally conceded to be desirable.

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4. The report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions contained a draft resolution on the subject (A/8532, and Corr.1, annex III).

In the course of the consideration of the item, the following amendments to this draft resolution were introduced:

(a) by Brazil, to the fourth preambular paragraph of the draft resolution.

"1. Add the words 'and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions' after the word 'Unit'.

"2. Substitute the word 'their' for 'its'.

"3. Change the word 'report' to 'reports'."

(b) by the United States:

"1. Insert as a new operative paragraph 4 the following:

'Invites the Economic and Social Council to request its subsidiary bodies to follow the principles set forth in paragraph 3 when preparing their reports to the Council.'

"2. Renumber paragraphs 4 through 13 of the draft resolution."

(c) by Ecuador:

"Add the following operative paragraph:

'Requests the Secretary-General to take such measures as he deems appropriate to ensure that documents for consideration by the General Assembly are distributed, as far as possible, before the opening of the session'."

(d) by Pakistan, to operative paragraph 2 of the draft resolution:

"Insert the words 'on an experimental basis' after the words 'to reduce'."

(e) by India:

"The deletion of operative paragraph 11 of the draft resolution."

Further, at the 147th plenary of the Committee, the following oral amendment to operative paragraph 3 of the draft resolution was presented:

(f) by Denmark:

"Add the words 'by its Main Committees' after the words 'by its subsidiary organs'."

as well as the following oral subamendment to the new operative paragraph proposed in the amendment submitted by Ecuador (para.(c) above):

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(g) by Denmark:

"Add the words 'including the possible application of modern management techniques' after the words 'such measures'."

5. At its 1473rd meeting, the Committee took the following decisions on the draft resolution and the amendments proposed thereto as set out in the foregoing paragraph:

(a) It adopted, without objection, the amendments proposed by Brazil (para.4 (a) above), the United States (para.4 (b) above) and Denmark (para.4 (f) above),

(b) It adopted, by 37 votes to 3 with 32 abstentions, the oral subamendment proposed by Denmark (para.4 (g) above) to the amendment proposed by Ecuador and then adopted, without objection, the amendment proposed by Ecuador (para.4 (c) above) as amended:

(c) It rejected, by 29 votes to 22, with 16 abstentions, the amendment proposed by Pakistan (para.4 (d) above).

The representative of India withdrew the amendment proposed by his delegation (para.4 (e) above). The Committee adopted the draft resolution, as amended, by 73 votes to none, with 1 abstention (see paragraph 7).

#### Decision of the Committee

6. In the course of the discussion, considerable attention was paid to the rationalization of the work of the Fifth Committee itself, a problem influenced greatly by the availability of documentation, particularly reports of the Secretary-General and of the Advisory Committee and the interrelationship of the timing of the meetings of the Advisory Committee and the Fifth Committee. At the 1471st meeting of the Fifth Committee, the representative of Yugoslavia submitted a text regarding these questions for inclusion in the Committee's report. Subsequently, on the basis of the discussion in the Committee and after consultation with other delegations and with the Chairman and members of the Advisory Committee, he introduced the following revised version:

"So that its proceedings may be expedited in the spirit of some of the recommendations of the Special Committee on the Rationalization of the Procedures and Organization of the General Assembly, the Fifth Committee requests the Secretary-General to prepare and distribute earlier than has been

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the case in recent years documents relevant to the issues before the Fifth Committee, thereby making it possible for the Advisory Committee for Administrative and Budgetary Questions to complete more of its work and submit more of its reports before the opening and during the early part of the regular session of the General Assembly. The Fifth Committee and the Advisory Committee should arrange their timetables in such a way as to facilitate each other's work."

The representative of Yugoslavia announced that the following countries supported his proposal: Afghanistan, Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Denmark, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Mexico, Nigeria, Norway, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Sudan, Zaire and Zambia. The Fifth Committee approved, without objection, the inclusion of the paragraph proposed.

#### RECOMMENDATION OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE

7. The Fifth Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

#### Publications and documentation of the United Nations

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 593 (VI) of 4 February 1952, 789 (VIII) of 9 December 1953, 1202 (XII) and 1203 (XII) of 13 December 1957, 1272 (XIII) of 14 November 1958, 1851 (XVII) of 19 December 1962, 1987 (XVIII) of 17 December 1963, 2116 (XX) of 21 December 1965, 2150 (XXI) of 4 November 1966, 2292 (XXII) of 8 December 1967, 2361 (XXII) of 19 December 1967, 2478 (XXIII) of 21 December 1968, 2538 (XXIV) of 11 December 1969, and 2732 (XXV) of 16 December 1970.

Having considered part A of the report by the Joint Inspection Unit,<sup>1/</sup> section IX of the report of the Special Committee on the Rationalization of the Procedures and Organization of the General Assembly<sup>2/</sup> and the observations of the Secretary-General<sup>3/</sup> and of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions,<sup>4/</sup>

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1/ A/8319 and Corr.1.

2/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 26 (A/8426).

3/ A/8468.

4/ A/8532.

Welcoming the action taken by the Economic and Social Council, in section III of resolution 1623 (II) of 30 July 1971, to improve the effectiveness and reduce the volume of its documentation,

Expressing its appreciation to the Joint Inspection Unit and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions for their reports,

Convinced that the control and limitation of United Nations documentation is necessary for the effective and economical operation of the Organization,

1. Takes note of part A, relating to documentation, of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit, and the related observations of the Secretary-General and of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, and section IX, relating to documentation, of the report of the Special Committee on the Rationalization of the Procedures and Organization of the General Assembly;

2. Requests the Secretary-General to reduce in 1972 the volume of documentation originating in the Secretariat, other than meetings records, by 15 per cent over-all, compared with the volume of such documentation in 1970 and, to that end, to take such administrative action as may be necessary, including the establishment of departmental quotas, to achieve that target;

3. Decides that the reports submitted to it by its subsidiary organs, by its Main Committees, by the Trade and Development Board and by the Industrial Development Board shall be drafted on the basis of the following principles:

(a) The reports should be action-oriented and concise and should contain precise information confined to a description of the work done by the organ concerned, to the conclusions it has reached, to its decisions and to the recommendations made to the General Assembly;

(b) Introductions containing background information should, as far as possible, be confined to matters of substance rather than procedure and should contain only what it is essential to bring to the notice of the General Assembly;

(c) The account of the deliberations should be concise and should be supplemented, as necessary, by cross-references to the summary records;

(d) Texts available in easily accessible documents should not be incorporated in or annexed to the report,

(e) Texts which are not easily accessible should not be annexed when their substance can reasonably be incorporated in the main body of the report;

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(f) Participants should not be listed by name, unless they are serving in their individual capacity;

(g) Where appropriate, reports should include a summary of the proposals, conclusions and recommendations contained therein;

4. Invites the Economic and Social Council to request its subsidiary bodies to follow the principles set forth in paragraph 3 above when preparing their reports to the Council;

5. Requests the Trade and Development Board and the Industrial Development Board to adopt decisions for the control of their documentation, applying mutatis mutandis the guidelines set out in section III of Economic and Social Council resolution 1623 (LI);

6. Invites the Security Council to implement recommendation 7 contained in chapter IX of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit;

7. Invites the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, the Trade and Development Board and the Industrial Development Board to adopt decisions containing provisions similar to those in paragraph 10 (b) of General Assembly resolution 2538 (XXIV).

8. Decides that for the purposes of paragraph 10 (b) of resolution 2538 (XXIV) the term "summary records" shall mean any meetings records that are prepared by précis-writers and/or translators;

9. Requests all its Main Committees, when considering items on their agenda which involve the submission of annual reports of subsidiary organs or of the Secretary-General, to review whether such reports can be submitted at less frequent intervals;

10. Draws the attention of the Economic and Social Council to recommendation 10 contained in section IX of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit;

11. Invites the Secretary-General to take appropriate steps to implement recommendations 14 to 26 contained in part A, section IX, of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit, in the light of the observations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions;

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12. Decides to make an over-all reduction of \$1.25 million in the provisions for documentation in the budget of the United Nations for the financial year 1972;

13. Requests the Secretary-General to reflect in his budget estimates for 1973 and subsequent years the progressive savings which can be expected to flow from the implementation of the recommendations relating to the control and limitation of documentation;

14. Further requests the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its twenty-eighth session a concise report on the implementation of the present resolution;

15. Requests the Secretary-General to take such measures, including the possible application of modern management techniques, as he deems appropriate to ensure that documents for consideration by the General Assembly are distributed, as far as possible, before the opening of the session.

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