

UNITED NATIONS  
GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY



Distr.  
GENERAL

A/38/585  
22 November 1983  
ENGLISH  
ORIGINAL: SPANISH



Thirty-eighth session  
Agenda item 114

PATTERN OF CONFERENCES

Report of the Fifth Committee

Rapporteur: Mr. Even FONTAINE ORTIZ (Cuba)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its 4th plenary meeting, on 23 September 1983, the General Assembly decided to include in the agenda of its thirty-eighth session, and to allocate to the Fifth Committee, the item entitled:

"Pattern of conferences:

- (a) Report of the Committee on Conferences;
- (b) Reports of the Secretary-General."

2. The Fifth Committee considered this item at its 4th, 8th, 9th and 25th meetings, on 30 September, 10 and 12 October and 2 November 1983. Comments and observations made in the course of the discussion of the item and replies to queries raised are reflected in the summary records of the Committee (A/C.5/38/SR.4, 8, 9 and 25).

3. For its consideration of the item, the Committee had before it the report of the Committee on Conferences. 1/

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1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 32 (A/38/32).



(b) Insert new paragraph 5, reading as follows:

"5. Invites United Nations organs to hold informal consultations with the aim of reaching agreement on organizational questions as well as on the composition of the bureaux before the opening of their substantive sessions."

(4) Draft resolution E

(a) Delete the letters A, C and D between "36/117" and "of 10 December 1981" in the preambular paragraph;

(b) Replace paragraphs 1, 2 and 3, by the following:

"1. Recommends to Member States that they take into consideration the aim of limiting to a minimum requests for the preparation of reports or the circulation of documents;

"2. Recommends to Member States and specialized agencies that, when preparing their replies to questionnaires or submissions of agencies and programmes of the United Nations system, they take into consideration the aim of achieving maximum brevity in setting out their positions;

"3. Requests the Secretary-General, when sending out such questionnaires, to attach to them a reference to the present resolution;"

(c) Replace paragraph 6 by the following:

"6. Requests the Secretary-General to examine ways of improving the drafting skills of Secretariat officials who are involved with the various phases of preparing final reports of United Nations bodies with a view to producing more concise reports;"

(d) Replace paragraph 11 by the following:

"11. Requests the Committee on Conferences to examine the various causes of the late issuance of documentation in the different official and working languages and to consider possible solutions to this problem;"

(5) Insert a new draft resolution reading as follows:

"F

"Improved organization of work and effective use  
of conference resources

"The General Assembly

"1. Requests the Secretary-General to provide the Committee on Conferences with data in summary form on:

/...

"(a) The physical and human conference-servicing resources for United Nations Headquarters and United Nations offices generally, including rooms available and documentation, interpretation and translation capacity, in a format enabling comparison of the demand and the conference-servicing capacity for all categories of meetings of United Nations organs - scheduled, anticipated to the extent possible, and held - grouped according to subject-matter;

"(b) External conference servicing available to the United Nations in case of urgent or unforeseen demands on the calendar;

"2. Requests the Secretary-General to submit to all United Nations bodies the relevant information requested under paragraph 1 as supplementary data for their implementation of the present resolution."

### III. DECISIONS OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE

6. At the 25th meeting, the Committee considered the question of the venue of the regular sessions in 1984 of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The Committee had before it a statement by the Secretary-General (A/C.5/38/31) on the administrative and financial implications of draft resolution A recommended by the Committee on Conferences in paragraph 4 of its report. 1/

7. On the proposal of the Chairman, the Committee decided, by 65 votes to 18, with 14 abstentions, to approve the venue of the regular sessions in 1984 of ECA, ECLA and ESCAP as proposed by the Commissions concerned and endorsed by the Economic and Social Council, and as reflected in the report of the Committee on Conferences.

8. At the same meeting, on the proposal of the representative of Kenya, the Committee decided, without a vote, to change the entry under the column heading "Location" for item 98 of the draft calendar of conferences for 1985 (World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women) to read "Nairobi/To be determined" (see annex II B of the report of the Committee on Conferences).

9. The Committee then adopted, without a vote, the amendments in document A/C.5/38/L.6, as orally revised, and the draft resolutions recommended by the Committee on Conferences, as amended (see para. 11, draft resolutions A to F).

10. The representatives of Austria, Egypt, Iran (Islamic Republic of), New Zealand, Thailand, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America made statements in explanation of position after the adoption of the various decisions.

#### IV. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE

11. The Fifth Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolutions:

##### Pattern of conferences

###### A

##### Report of the Committee on Conferences

The General Assembly,

Having considered the report of the Committee on Conferences, 2/

1. Takes note with appreciation of the report of the Committee on Conferences;

2. Approves the calendar of conferences and meetings of the United Nations for 1984-1985 as submitted by the Committee on Conferences, subject to any amendments as a result of subsequent decisions taken by the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session;

3. Requests the Secretary-General to take all appropriate measures with a view to achieving maximum efficiency and effectiveness in the use of conference resources where implementing the calendar of conferences and meetings for 1984-1985.

###### B

##### Membership of the Committee on Conferences

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 3351 (XXIX) of 18 December 1974, 32/72 of 9 December 1977 and 35/10 A of 3 November 1980,

Requests the President of the General Assembly, after consultations with the chairmen of the regional groups, to appoint to appoint 22 Member States, on the basis of an equitable geographical balance, to serve on the Committee on Conferences for a three-year term.

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2/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 32 (A/38/32).

C

Pattern of conferences

The General Assembly

1. Requests the Committee on Conferences to examine the provisions of section I of General Assembly resolution 31/140 of 17 December 1976, as well as all other provisions relating to the pattern of conferences, and to report to the Assembly at its thirty-ninth session;
2. Requests the Secretary-General to bring to the attention of the Committee on Conferences the summary of the discussion in the Fifth Committee during the current session on the item "Pattern of conferences", including the text of all amendments proposed to draft resolution C recommended by the Committee on Conferences in paragraph 4 of its report. 2/

D

Shortening of session or adoption of a biennial cycle  
for sessions of United Nations organs

The General Assembly,

Reaffirming its resolutions 32/71, section IV, and 32/72 of 9 December 1977 and 35/10 A of 3 November 1980,

Concerned at the serious under-utilization of conference resources by United Nations organs,

1. Takes note of the proposals submitted by the Committee on Conferences designed to relieve the overloading of conference services;
2. Invites the Committee on Conferences to pursue further its consultations with the officers of those organs which have over the past three years utilized 75 per cent or less of the conference resources made available to them, with a view to adjusting the length of their sessions accordingly;
3. Requests its subsidiary organs to consider, in the interests of greater efficiency, meeting and reporting on a biennial basis;
4. Requests United Nations organs, especially those which have over the past few years under-utilized the meeting time allocated to them, to consider at their organizational sessions the question of improving the organization of their work in order to secure a more effective use of conference resources and to put forward concrete proposals on this matter, including, where feasible, the shortening of sessions;

5. Invites United Nations organs to hold informal consultations with the aim of reaching agreement on organizational questions as well as on the composition of the bureaux before the opening of their substantive sessions.

E

Control and limitation of documentation

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 2292 (XXII) of 8 December 1967, 2538 (XXIV) of 11 December 1969, 2732 (XXV) of 16 December 1970, 31/140, section II, of 17 December 1976, 33/56, section II, of 14 December 1978, 34/50 of 23 November 1979, 36/117 of 10 December 1981 and 37/14 C and D of 16 November 1982 and its decision 34/401 of 19 September 1980,

1. Recommends to Member States that they take into consideration the aim of limiting to a minimum requests for the preparation of reports or the circulation of documents;

2. Recommends to Member States and specialized agencies that, when preparing their replies to questionnaires or submissions of agencies and programmes of the United Nations system, they take into consideration the aim of achieving maximum brevity in setting out their positions;

3. Requests the Secretary-General, when sending out such questionnaires, to attach to them a reference to the present resolution;

4. Invites its subsidiary organs to include in their agendas an item on control and limitation of documentation with a view to ensuring the production of concise reports;

5. Commends the Secretary-General for his efforts in reducing the length and number of reports originating in the Secretariat and requests him to continue with these measures;

6. Requests the Secretary-General to examine ways of improving the drafting skills of Secretariat officials who are involved with the various phases of preparing final reports of United Nations bodies with a view to producing more concise reports;

7. Calls upon its subsidiary organs not to reproduce in their reports the full text of earlier resolutions relevant to their work, but instead, as a frame of reference, to include a list of relevant documents in their reports, giving the exact titles and symbols;

8. Decides that the practice of reproducing statements in extenso as separate documents shall be discontinued for all its subsidiary organs that are entitled to summary records;

9. Decides further that any exceptions to this rule may be made by the body concerned only if the statements are to serve as bases for discussions and if, after hearing a statement of the financial implications, the body decides that one or more statements in extenso may be included in the summary record, or reproduced as separate documents or as annexes to authorized documents;

10. Requests the Committee on Conferences to undertake a study of the feasibility of instituting an abbreviated form of summary record;

11. Requests the Committee on Conferences to examine the various causes of the late issuance of documents in the different official and working languages and to consider possible solutions to this problem;

12. Urges all treaty bodies to review their documentation requirements, with particular reference to the possible reduction of their need for summary records;

13. Invites the Committee on Conferences to examine the report to be issued by the Joint Inspection Unit on publications policy and practice in the United Nations system;

14. Requests its subsidiary organs responsible for the issuance of recurrent publications to review them with the objective of identifying and discontinuing those which no longer serve a useful purpose;

15. Invites the Economic and Social Council similarly to request its subsidiary organs responsible for recurrent publications to undertake such a review;

16. Requests the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination to review recurrent publications in the context of the medium-term plan or the programme budget, as appropriate;

17. Recommends that, in conducting their reviews, intergovernmental bodies bear in mind the following criteria:

- (a) Usefulness to the end-user of the publication as gauged from end-user response or from the sales record of a publication;
- (b) Filling of a need;
- (c) High standard of analysis or data;
- (d) Promotion of the principles and purposes of the Organization;
- (e) Continued validity of the original mandate;
- (f) Recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit in its report on publications policy and practice in the United Nations system of organizations, if applicable.

F

Improved organization of work and effective use of  
conference resources

The General Assembly

1. Requests the Secretary-General to provide the Committee on Conferences with data in summary form on:

(a) The physical and human conference-servicing resources for United Nations Headquarters and United Nations offices generally, including rooms available and documentation, interpretation and translation capacity, in a format enabling comparison of the demand and the conference-servicing capacity for all categories of meetings of United Nations organs - scheduled, anticipated to the extent possible, and held - grouped according to subject-matter;

(b) External conference servicing available to the United Nations in case of urgent or unforeseen demands on the calendar;

2. Requests the Secretary-General to submit to all United Nations bodies the relevant information requested under paragraph 1 above as supplementary data for their implementation of the present resolution.

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