



General Assembly

Sixty-eighth session

First Committee

2nd meeting

Friday, 4 October 2013, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

Chair: Mr. Dabbashi (Libya)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Introductory statement

The Chair (*spoke in Arabic*): Let me begin by extending a very warm welcome to all delegations participating in the work of the First Committee at this session. I look forward to working closely with each and every one of them in the weeks ahead.

As in previous years, we have a full agenda this year, and I am convinced that we also have the necessary will and commitment to conduct our work in a cooperative, efficient and expeditious manner. In fulfilling my responsibility to guide the work of the First Committee to a successful conclusion this year, I count on the usual cooperation and goodwill of all delegations. I am also confident that I can rely on the support of all members of the Bureau, in particular the three Vice-Chairs — Mr. Fernando Luque Márquez of Ecuador, Mr. Miloš Nikolić of Montenegro and Mr. Peter Winkler of Germany — and the Rapporteur, Mr. Khodadad Seifi Pargou of the Islamic Republic of Iran. I have no doubt that the Committee will benefit tremendously from their collective wisdom, knowledge and experience.

Furthermore, I am certain that the Committee will continue to enjoy the full support of the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management.

Organization of work

The Chair: For our consideration of the organization of work of the First Committee at this

session, I wish to draw the Committee's attention to document A/C.1/68/1, which contains a letter dated 20 September 2013 from the President of the General Assembly to the Chair of the First Committee. The letter highlights the decisions taken by the General Assembly at the 2nd plenary meeting of its sixty-eighth session, held on 20 September 2013, pertaining to the allocation of items to the First Committee. At that meeting, the Assembly decided to allocate 21 agenda items — items 89 to 107, 122 and 135 — to the First Committee for consideration during the session, of which 19 — items 89 to 107 — relate to disarmament and international security issues.

I will now proceed to highlight the details of the Committee's proposed programme of work and timetable as outlined in document A/67/418.

As will be recalled, the Committee adopted the programme of work and timetable on 7 November last year in the context of its consideration of the item on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. Subsequently, the Assembly, by its decision 67/250 of 3 December 2012, adopted the programme of work. In keeping with the Committee's working methods, it has now been issued as a document of the First Committee under the symbol number A/C.1/68/CRP.1 and is now before the Committee. Members will note that documents A/67/418 and A/C.1/68/CRP.1 contain the same information on the programme of work and timetable.

As is customary, the programme of work and the timetable were prepared taking into account a number of initiatives proposed over the past several years,

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including General Assembly decision 52/416 B, of 8 September 1998, on the rationalization of the work and reform of the agenda of the First Committee. Also taken into account in this regard was paragraph 36 of the annex to resolution 51/241, of 31 July 1997, which reads as follows:

“The First Committee and the Fourth Committee shall not meet simultaneously and may consider meeting in a sequential manner during the regular session of the General Assembly.”

Accordingly, the meetings of the First Committee this year, as in previous years, have been scheduled either in the morning or in the afternoon except on Monday 22 October, where both morning and afternoon meetings are scheduled, as members may have noticed from the provisional programme of work and timetable before the Committee. I wish to clarify that this was done with the agreement of the Chairs of both the First and the Fourth Committees.

This year, the First Committee will commence its substantive work on Monday, 7 October. It will hold a total of 24 meetings to consider the agenda items allocated to it and will conclude its work by 6 November, in accordance with the recommendations of the General Committee set out in paragraph 14 of document A/68/250, which was adopted by the General Assembly at its 2nd plenary meeting.

The First Committee will also consider and take action on its tentative programme of work for the sixty-ninth session, under agenda item 122, concerning the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

As members know, item 135 on programme planning has been allocated to all the Main Committees, as well as the Assembly plenary, in continuing efforts to enhance the discussion of evaluation, planning, budgeting and monitoring reports. The First Committee will take up this item if the Assembly assigns any report to it.

In accordance with the First Committee's established practice, and as currently reflected in the provisional programme of work for this session, the Committee will conduct its work this year in three phases, namely, the general debate on all items, thematic discussion on specific subjects and action on all draft resolutions. I shall comment briefly on what we should expect under each of these segments.

The first phase, the general debate on all items, will run from 7 to 16 October for a total of seven meetings.

It should be noted that during this phase of our work, the Committee will have its usual exchange with the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs on the follow-up of resolutions and decisions adopted by the Committee at its previous sessions and the presentation of reports. The exact date for this exchange will be announced in due course, in consultation with the Office of the High Representative.

To maximize the time available to us during the general debate phase, I propose that we maintain the practice of using a rolling list of speakers, which is currently open to all delegations wishing to take the floor. I am aware that a considerable number of delegations have already inscribed their names on the list, and I invite those intending to speak who have not yet inscribed their names on the list to do so as soon as possible. As indicated in the programme of work, the list of speakers for the general debate will be closed on Tuesday, 8 October, at 6 p.m.

I should also like to remind all delegations that wish to inscribe their names on the list to keep in mind that a rolling list implies that they should be prepared to intervene at any time, possibly even one meeting sooner than they had originally planned to speak. To make the most efficient use of the resources allocated to us, I wish to urge all delegations taking the floor to kindly adhere to the Committee's usual practice of limiting statements to a maximum of 10 minutes when speaking in a national capacity and 15 minutes for those delegations speaking on behalf of groups of delegations.

In this regard, I invite all delegations with relatively long statements to deliver a concise summary of their text and submit the full statement in written form for posting on the First Committee web portal QuickFirst. I hope that all delegations are familiar with the procedure for accessing the web portal. Those who need assistance in that regard should contact the Secretary of the Committee.

In accordance with the Committee's established practice, the second phase of the Committee's work will focus on a structured thematic discussion of specific subjects relating to the disarmament and international security agenda items allocated to it, as well as on the introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions and decisions that will be submitted under those items. This segment will run from 17 to 29 October, for a total of 10 meetings. However, should the Committee complete

the general debate segment ahead of schedule — that is, before the end of Wednesday, 16 October — we will decide at that time whether to start the thematic discussion phase immediately or to stick to the original schedule.

During the second phase of our work and in accordance with the established practice, the Committee will hold a further exchange with the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and other high-level officials in the field of arms control and disarmament, as well as panel discussions and other exchanges with independent experts. Also during the segment, the Committee will devote time for the participation of non-governmental organizations represented in its work.

As in previous years, the Committee's meetings during the thematic segment will be divided into two parts. The first will begin in formal mode with a panel or guest speaker, as applicable, followed by an informal question-and-answer session. The second part will be in formal mode and will consist of interventions by delegations on the items under consideration, as well as the introduction of draft resolutions.

In line with the Committee's established practice, an indicative timetable outlining the details of the programme of work for our thematic segment has been prepared and is contained in document A/C.1/68/CRP.2, which has also been circulated in the room.

I have been informed that the President of the General Assembly has expressed interest in addressing the First Committee at some point during our thematic segment. I shall duly inform the Committee once we have confirmation of the day and time for his statement.

This year, we will continue with the electronic submission of draft resolutions, and the Secretariat will provide further details concerning the submission process in the technical briefing directly following this meeting. I would encourage all delegations to remain in the room for this essential briefing.

To facilitate the Committee's work, especially in terms of providing sufficient time to delegations for consultations and also to ensure that the Secretariat has the requisite time frame for processing draft resolutions in all official languages, I would like to propose that, as indicated in the programme of work, the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions and decisions be at noon on Thursday, 17 October. That submission

deadline is also necessary in order to allow adequate time to produce, as early as possible and in all official languages, all other draft documents usually issued under the "L" symbol series for the consideration of delegations.

I therefore appeal to all delegations to adhere strictly to the submission deadline of 12 noon on Thursday, 17 October. I would even encourage delegations to submit draft resolutions and decisions before the stipulated deadline, if possible, to allow enough time for all delegations to seek instructions from their capitals when necessary, so that the texts finally adopted will reflect the highest possible degree of agreement.

It is especially important that delegations submit as early as possible all draft resolutions that might entail programme budget implications so as to enable the Secretariat to prepare in a timely manner the necessary statements reflecting those implications.

Furthermore, I would like to remind all delegations that the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and the Fifth Committee require time to review the programme budget implications of any draft resolution before it can be acted upon by the General Assembly. In that connection, I draw the attention of delegations to the guidance of the General Committee contained in its report to the General Assembly in document A/68/250. In paragraph 47 of that report, the General Committee reaffirms that the Fifth Committee is the appropriate Main Committee of the General Assembly entrusted with the responsibility for administrative and budgetary matters. It also reaffirms the role of ACABQ in that context.

In paragraph 48 of the same report, the General Committee further draws the attention of the General Assembly to the views expressed by the ACABQ regarding the use of the phrase "within available resources", as set out in document A/54/7. Accordingly, I would kindly request delegations to avoid using the phrase "within existing resources" in draft resolutions or decisions of the First Committee.

The third and last phase of the work of the Committee — action on all draft resolutions and decisions — will cover the period from Wednesday, 30 October, to Wednesday, 6 November, with a total of six meetings scheduled for this purpose, as indicated in the programme of work contained in document A/C.1/68/CRP.1.

With regard to voting, I propose that the Committee retain the procedure we have followed in previous years, by which draft resolutions are grouped in the following clusters: nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction, outer space (disarmament aspects), conventional weapons, regional disarmament and security, other disarmament measures and international security, and disarmament machinery. I will provide the Committee with further information on this final phase of our work closer to the beginning of that segment.

Allow me to observe that at this point last year the Committee concluded the final phase of its work in a timely fashion, despite the loss of three working days owing to the tragic storm Sandy. With the full and active support and cooperation of the Committee, I am confident that we will also be able to take action on all draft resolutions and decisions that will come before the Committee this year, in order to conclude our work within the time available to us, or even earlier.

May I take it that the Committee wishes to proceed in accordance with the proposed programme of work and timetable contained in documents A/67/418, A/C.1/68/CRP.1 and A/C.1/68/CRP.2?

It was so decided.

The Chair (*spoke in Arabic*): In order to make full use of the time and facilities allocated to the Committee, I intend to begin our meetings promptly at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. and to end at 1 p.m. and 6 p.m., respectively. I am sure that I can count on everyone's support and cooperation in that regard.

I should also like to draw attention to agenda item 5 in document A/68/250, entitled "Election of the officers of the Main Committees", and also to rule 99 (a) of the rules of procedure, as amended by resolution 56/509 of 10 July 2002, which reads as follows:

"All the Main Committees shall, at least three months before the opening of the session, elect a Chairman. Elections of the other officers provided for in rule 103 shall be held at the latest by the end of the first week of the session."

In the light of that provision, I propose that the First Committee consider this item some time in May or June 2014, about three months before the opening of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly. May I take it that the Committee wishes to proceed accordingly?

It was so decided.

The Chair (*spoke in Arabic*): In that connection, I wish to draw the Committee's attention to document A/C.1/68/INF/4, containing the relevant provisions of resolution 67/297, of 29 August 2013, on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, as mentioned by the General Committee in document A/68/250.

Those provisions, among other things, encouraged the Main Committees to elect their respective Bureaus at least three months in advance of the session for better coordination and for a smoother hand-over of their work; benefit from their respective QuickPlace to facilitate the smooth organization and timely conclusion of their work; share experiences, best practices and lessons learned concerning their respective working methods; and make proposals for the further biennialization, triennialization, clustering and elimination of items on the agenda of the Assembly, as necessary. I would like to encourage all delegations to share their thoughts and recommendations on those provisions during their interventions.

Before I conclude, I would like to reflect briefly on the trend regarding the distribution of documents. As members are well aware, we are witnessing a remarkable shift away from the distribution of United Nations documents on paper as those documents are increasingly being issued in electronic form, making them more accessible to representatives through the Internet at the respective Permanent Missions and in conference rooms here. Taking advantage of the convenience, quick accessibility and cost-effectiveness offered by that trend, a number of United Nations committees have already switched to a paperless operation.

Although we are still far from attaining a completely paperless status, I urge the Committee to try to work in a paperless mode whenever possible. Delegations can help tremendously by not requesting the Secretariat to pile up all documents in the Conference Room in all languages but instead to request copies of the necessary documentation in a specific language on an individual basis. In any event, the Secretariat will maintain the print-on-demand service for delegations in need of specific documents.

Another dependable source is the First Committee web portal QuickFirst, where all documents can be easily and quickly accessed in English through on-site search engines. In that way, we can contribute to the

greening of the United Nations and save resources for the Organization.

May I take it that the Committee wishes to proceed accordingly?

It was so decided.

The Chair (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with the programme of work and timetable contained in document A/C.1/68/CRP.1, the Committee will begin its substantive work on Monday, 7 October, at 10 a.m. sharp in this Conference Room. I look forward to working closely with all members in the coming weeks.

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.