

United Nations
**GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**

FIFTEENTH SESSION

Official Records



**GENERAL COMMITTEE, 133rd
MEETING**

Wednesday, 14 December 1960,
at 10.25 a.m.

NEW YORK

CONTENTS

	Page
<i>Request for the inclusion of an additional item in the agenda of the fifteenth session: item proposed by Bolivia, Costa Rica and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (continued).</i>	41

Chairman: Mr. Frederick H. BOLAND (Ireland).

Request for the inclusion of an additional item in the agenda of the fifteenth session: item proposed by Bolivia, Costa Rica and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (A/4616) (continued)

1. Mr. ORTIZ MARTIN (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of his own delegation and that of Bolivia, said that there had been no comprehensive review of the General Assembly's methods and procedures since 1949. The working machinery of any organization should normally be overhauled from time to time in order to take into account both past experience and new developments. In the case of the United Nations, the admission of many new States created a problem. Sessions tended to become longer and longer with the result that the new Member States, most of which were economically under-developed, had to make considerable financial sacrifices and sometimes could not afford representation in all committees. Accordingly, with the aim of instituting as rapidly as possible measures designed to expedite the Assembly's work, including the use of mechanical and technical processes for voting, the delegations which had submitted document A/4616 requested the General Committee to recommend the inclusion in the General Assembly's agenda of an item entitled "Review of the methods and procedures of the General Assembly".

2. Mr. MEZINCESCU (Romania) said that, although he had studied the explanatory memorandum (A/4616) and had listened carefully to the Costa Rican representative, he failed to see what line the review proposed by Bolivia, Costa Rica and the United Kingdom should follow, and was surprised at the haste with which the matter was being brought before the Committee. The agenda of the General Assembly and its Committees was so overloaded that the General Committee had just decided (132nd meeting) to recommend that the Assembly should defer from 17 to 20 December 1960 the date for the closure of the first part of its fifteenth regular session. Furthermore, article 15 of the rules of procedure provided that "no additional item may be considered until seven days have elapsed since it was placed on the agenda, unless the General Assembly, by a two-thirds majority of the Members present and voting, decides otherwise, and until a committee has reported upon the question concerned". In view of the stipulated interval of seven days, the item could not

be taken up before the end of the first part of the session and, even if the General Assembly decided by a two-thirds majority to waive the seven-day rule, the Sixth Committee would still have to submit a report to the Assembly and the latter would have to consider it. As, in addition, the General Assembly would probably be called upon in the next few days to re-examine the serious question of the situation in the Congo, it was hardly reasonable to recommend at the present stage the inclusion of a new item in the agenda.

3. In accordance with rule 117 of the rules of procedure, he formally moved the adjournment of the debate. He hoped, nevertheless, that the sponsors of the proposal would of their own accord agree to postpone the matter until the resumption of the fifteenth regular session.

4. The CHAIRMAN pointed out that under rule 117 of the rules of procedure two representatives could speak in favour of, and two against, the motion for adjournment.

5. Mr. ILLUECA (Panama) noted that the Romanian representative's criticisms were not directed at the proposal itself but were mainly concerned with the lack of time. The three-Power proposal was specifically designed to expedite the future work of the Assembly and its Committees. The immediate inclusion of the item in the agenda and its allocation to the Sixth Committee would involve no delay. The Sixth Committee could arrange for a study to be made as soon as possible and the Assembly could go into the matter at its sixteenth session. He would therefore be grateful to the Romanian representative if he would withdraw his motion for adjournment.

6. Mr. MOROZOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the three-Power proposal to include in the agenda of the fifteenth regular session a review of the methods and procedures of the General Assembly could have no practical outcome since the current session was to be suspended in a few days.

7. The Committee was being asked to present a hasty recommendation to the General Assembly that it include a new item in its agenda so that at a later stage a Committee, the Sixth Committee presumably, could submit proposals. Under rule 15 of the rules of procedure, no additional item could be taken up before seven days had elapsed since it had been placed on the agenda, unless the General Assembly by a two-thirds majority decided otherwise. In the present case, the two-thirds majority would be required. However, a number of delegations would question the usefulness of examining at the present juncture the question of reviewing the methods and procedures of the General Assembly. The discussion would accordingly be prolonged and the Assembly would waste a good deal of time when it should be examining several questions of the highest importance, notably the questions of colonialism and Algeria. It would be unrealistic to initiate

at the present stage a hasty examination of a technical matter and to disregard the most important problems.

8. It might be argued that the three Powers only intended to entrust the review to a special committee which would later submit a report to the General Assembly. But what was in fact being proposed was that the General Assembly should take a political decision and should recognize the need for amending its rules of procedure as a whole. Such a decision would be serious, for once taken it might lead to all kinds of changes. Attempts might be made to modify a whole series of procedural rules on the pretext that they were badly applied. It was true that the application of a number of rules was unsatisfactory, but that was not because the methods of work were bad; the political situation and the existing world tension were usually to blame. The adoption of a decision to amend the rules of procedure would be all the more difficult because the three delegations had given no precise indication of how they envisaged the substance of the problem. They had not submitted any specific amendments which would make their intentions clear. In those circumstances, the decision to be taken by the General Assembly would be far from being merely procedural.

9. It was also unwarranted to claim that the increase in the number of Member States must automatically entail a comprehensive review of the rules of procedure. On the whole those rules were fairly democratic; a few delegations should not be allowed to invoke the delay in the proceedings of the current session of the Assembly as an argument in favour of the wholesale revision of the rules of procedure. The Soviet Union delegation therefore whole-heartedly supported the Romanian representative's proposal. However, it saw no objection to the request submitted by the delegations of Bolivia, Costa Rica and the United Kingdom being taken up at the resumed fifteenth session of the General Assembly.

10. Mr. ORTIZ MARTIN (Costa Rica) pointed out that the need for some amendment of the rules of procedure had been recognized. The three delegations had no intention of giving the General Assembly extra work, but thought that steps should be taken at the current session with a view to initiating a thorough study of the Assembly's methods and procedures. That would make it possible for the Committee concerned to report on the question to the General Assembly at its sixteenth session.

11. He asked that the meeting should be suspended to enable the three delegations to consult one another.

12. Mr. MOROZOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) suggested that the Committee should adjourn and resume discussion of the question the following morning, so as not to delay the work of the plenary Assembly.

13. Mr. ORTIZ MARTIN (Costa Rica) formally moved the suspension of the meeting under rule 119 of the rules of procedure.

It was so decided.

The meeting was suspended at 11.15 a.m. and resumed at 11.40 a.m.

14. Sir Patrick DEAN (United Kingdom) said he regretted the turn that the debate had taken. It had been after careful consideration that the delegations of Bolivia, Costa Rica and the United Kingdom had decided to request the inclusion in the agenda, at the current session, of an item entitled "Review of the methods and procedures of the General Assembly". The reasons for the request were set out in the explanatory memorandum in document A/4616 and had been stated in detail by the Costa Rican representative. The three delegations had been led by the informal discussions that had already been held to hope that the matter would not prove controversial and would not assume political significance. The debate, however, had shown that certain representatives did not share that view and ascribed sinister intentions to the three delegations. He wished to protest strongly against such imputations. He pointed out that under rule 15 of the rules of procedure, which the Romanian representative had cited, the inclusion of an additional item in the agenda required only a decision by a simple majority of the Members present and voting. A vote by a two-thirds majority of the Assembly was only required when it was proposed that the item should be considered before seven days had elapsed since it had been placed on the agenda. The three delegations had had no intention of asking that the item should be dealt with before the adjournment of the session, since the Assembly would clearly not have enough time to do so. All they had wanted was that the Assembly should place the item on its agenda and allocate it to a Committee, which would have reported on it either at the resumed fifteenth session or at the sixteenth session. Although the item was admittedly not as burning an issue as certain political questions, it was nevertheless urgent in that it should be taken up as soon as possible.

15. In view of the opposition of certain representatives, his delegation was prepared to acquiesce with regret in the adjournment of the discussion. It would, however, be understood that the three delegations' request would remain on the General Committee's agenda and would be dealt with immediately upon the resumption of the fifteenth session.

16. The CHAIRMAN proposed that if there were no objections the General Committee should decide to adjourn consideration of the request submitted by Bolivia, Costa Rica and the United Kingdom (A/4616).

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.