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Chairman: Mr. Charles T. O. KING (Liberia).

AGENDA ITEM 62

Question of the consistent application of the principle of equitable geographical representation in the election of the President of the General Assembly (A/SPC/41) (concluded)

1. The CHAIRMAN invited those members of the Committee who wished to do so to explain their vote on the draft resolution adopted at the preceding meeting (A/SPC/41). In that connexion he recalled that, in accordance with the request of the representative of Mexico (168th meeting), it had been decided at the preceding meeting to bring the English and French versions of document A/SPC/L.42/Rev.1 into line with the Spanish, so as to reproduce the wording of Article 23 of the Charter of the United Nations.

2. Accordingly, in the operative paragraph of the draft resolution as adopted (A/SPC/41), the word "specially" should be inserted between the words "be" and "paid" in the English text; the words "dûment tenu compte" should be replaced by the words "tenu spécialement compte" in the French text; and the words "la debida" should be replaced by the word "especial" in the Spanish text.

3. Mr. UNGER (Sweden) said that his delegation, like others, considered that the office of President of the General Assembly was unique. The fact that the Charter provided that the General Assembly should elect its President for each session showed that the President of the Assembly was elected in his individual capacity and not as a representative of his country. The Swedish delegation therefore believed that in electing the President of the General Assembly, primary consideration should be given to the personal qualifications of the candidate. Other factors should nevertheless be taken into account in that election, in particular the prevailing circumstances and the principle of equitable geographical distribution. The established practice in the election

of the President of the General Assembly took account of those various factors and, in the view of the Swedish delegation, had proved sufficiently flexible to be deemed satisfactory on the whole. The Swedish delegation therefore had some doubt regarding the need for the debate which had taken place. That explained its negative reaction to the draft resolution submitted by Czechoslovakia and Romania (A/SPC/L.39) and to the amendments and sub-amendments, despite their constructive nature, aimed at establishing a proper balance between the factors involved.

4. Mr. WALDHEIM (Austria) said that his country had consistently supported the principle of equitable distribution, as set out in Article 23 of the Charter with regard to the composition of the Security Council and in Article 101 with regard to the recruitment of the staff of the Secretariat. The Austrian delegation had been unable, however, to vote for the original draft resolution (A/SPC/L.39) because it considered it impossible to apply a criterion based solely on geographical considerations in the election of the President of the General Assembly. While it was desirable to establish a rotation among the various areas to which the successive Presidents of the General Assembly should belong, the primary consideration must be the personal qualifications of the candidates. The Austrian delegation also shared the view of other delegations that, in the selection of its President, the General Assembly should be entirely free at each session and should not have its hands tied by a decision adopted at a previous session. The amendment submitted by eleven Latin American Powers (A/SPC/L.40) had taken account of those considerations, but since it had not been adopted in its initial form, the Austrian delegation had been compelled to vote against the draft resolution as amended by the sub-amendment contained in document A/SPC/L.42/Rev.1.

5. Mr. URRUTIA APARICIO (Guatemala) said that while, in the election of the President of the General Assembly, primary consideration should be given to the personal qualifications of the candidates, the principle of equitable geographical distribution and the prevailing political circumstances should not be disregarded. Like the majority in the Committee, the Guatemalan delegation had found the original draft resolution (A/SPC/L.39) unacceptable not only because the procedure outlined in the draft had been too rigid, but also because the personal qualifications of candidates had not been taken into account. It had voted in favour of the first sub-amendment in document A/SPC/L.42/Rev.1 because it had made the text of the eleven-Power amendment (A/SPC/L.40) more acceptable to many delegations without altering the substance of it. It had voted against the second sub-amendment because it considered that, in the election of the President of the General Assembly, priority should be given to the personal qualifications of the candidates. It had voted for the French sub-amendment (A/SPC/L.41) to the text proposed in the eleven-

Power amendment for the operative part because it had considered that the sub-amendment satisfactorily complemented that text. Since the sub-amendment had not been adopted, his delegation had voted against the text proposed for the operative part proposed in document A/SPC/L.40. It had done so because that amendment had failed to recognize the priority of the factors which should influence the election of the President of the General Assembly, namely: first, the personal qualifications of the candidates; secondly, equitable geographical representation; and thirdly, the prevailing political circumstances.

6. Mr. ALVARADO (Venezuela) considered that the General Assembly should enjoy full latitude in assessing the merits of a candidate for the presidency and should select the one who was best qualified, taking into account the principle of equitable geographical distribution. The Venezuelan delegation was therefore opposed to any rigid formula for the election of the President of the General Assembly. It had voted against the second sub-amendment in document A/SPC/L.42/Rev.1, which in its opinion would have hampered the General Assembly's freedom of choice. On the other hand, it had voted in favour of Italy's verbal sub-amendment and of the French sub-amendment (A/SPC/L.41) because they had made the text of the operative part proposed in the amendment (A/SPC/L.40) less severe. As those sub-amendments had not been adopted, the Venezuelan delegation had voted against the draft resolution as a whole.

7. Mr. CASSELL (Liberia) recalled that his delegation had not taken part in the general debate on the important question under discussion. It had, however, listened carefully to the views put forward not only by individual delegations, but also by various groups of delegations, some of which wanted to ensure respect for the principle of equitable geographical representation in the election of the President of the General Assembly and had sought to do so through a formal resolution, whereas others had wanted to maintain the *status quo*. The Liberian delegation was convinced of the justice of the basic principle on which the proposal considered by the Committee had been based, but it had shared the view of the representative of Ceylon (166th meeting) that the draft resolution (A/SPC/L.39) had provided too rigid a system of regional distribution of the office of President. In particular, the Liberian delegation had regretted that the Asian and African States had been grouped together. There were at the current time nine independent African States, and as there would be even more in 1960, they might feel the need to establish their own group. While they certainly had no wish to break off their good relations with the Asian States, they might possibly want to have their own representatives in the principal organs of the United Nations. The Liberian delegation hoped that the problem would eventually be resolved in such a way as to enable the representative of an African State—particularly a State situated south of the Sahara—to assume the presidency of the General Assembly. It furthermore rejected the idea that candidates worthy of that office could not be found in all the areas represented in the United Nations.

8. Although Liberia had not been able to vote in favour of operative paragraph 2 of the draft resolution (A/SPC/L.39) for the reasons stated, it had supported the amendments and sub-amendments contained in documents A/SPC/L.40 and A/SPC/L.42/Rev.1 because it had regarded them as compatible with the principle it

had just expressed. On the other hand, it had been unable to vote for the French sub-amendment (A/SPC/L.41) because of the undue emphasis placed on factors which the General Assembly and the delegations represented in it were alone competent to judge.

9. Mr. PETROS (Ethiopia) said that his delegation had welcomed the request by Czechoslovakia for the inclusion of item 62 in the agenda of the General Assembly because it had always supported the principle of equitable geographical representation in all the bodies of the United Nations. With regard to the election of the President of the General Assembly, it considered that both that principle and the personal qualifications of the candidates should be taken into account. The draft resolution (A/SPC/L.39) had been unacceptable to the Ethiopian delegation because the rigid formula advocated in that had failed to take the second consideration into account. His delegation had therefore supported the Latin American amendment (A/SPC/L.40), as amended by the sub-amendment submitted by Guinea and the United Arab Republic (A/SPC/L.42/Rev.1), because that had been more in line with its position. On the other hand, it had had to oppose the verbal sub-amendment of Italy and the sub-amendment of France (A/SPC/L.41), because the effect in both cases would have been to limit the application of the principle of equitable geographical representation in the election of the President of the General Assembly.

10. MR. PIRACHA (Pakistan), explaining his delegation's abstention from the vote on all the amendments and on the draft resolution as a whole, said that while it had inclined favourably towards the amendments and had found no particular fault with the wording proposed by Guinea and the United Arab Republic (A/SPC/L.42/Rev.1), it had nevertheless felt that the texts in question had given rise to overly divergent interpretations. Consequently, it had been difficult to know the exact meaning that would be attached to them. The Pakistan delegation had noted, however, that the variations in content of those amendments had not reflected any true divergences in points of view. The sponsors had merely endeavoured to find the right words to express what had been the unanimous concern of the Committee, namely, that representatives of all regions should be eligible to the office of President, due attention being paid to the special conditions implied by election to that eminent post. While the result of the vote had shown that a large number of delegations had not been satisfied with the wording that had been adopted, it did not seem impossible that a more acceptable wording could be found.

11. The Pakistan delegation also felt that the customary arrangements for electing the President should be sufficient to satisfy all the Members of the United Nations. If there had been a certain imbalance, there must surely be some way to correct it—and the Pakistan delegation would give favourable consideration to efforts in that direction—without having to resort to rigid rules, as provided in the draft resolution (A/SPC/L.39).

12. Mr. HANCHER (United States of America) said that his delegation was deeply concerned with the principle laid down by the Committee to govern the election of the President of the General Assembly. The representative of the United Arab Republic had said (166th meeting) that the fact of mentioning the personal qualifications which the President should possess for the performance of his duties before mentioning the

principle of equitable geographical distribution was tantamount to assigning a priority to the former consideration. That was not the interpretation of the United States delegation. In the wording in which it had been adopted (A/SPC/41), the draft resolution attributed equal importance to the personal qualifications which a candidate for President of the Assembly should possess and to the principle of equitable geographical representation. However, the United States delegation, like the majority of the Committee, was of the opinion that the personal qualifications should be the determining factor in the election of the President of the General Assembly. It also shared the view of the delegations of Sweden and Austria that no resolution on the matter had been necessary. For those reasons the United States delegation had voted against the draft resolution, and it hoped that, before the question was considered in plenary meeting, the members of the Committee would reflect on the possible future consequences of that resolution.

13. Mr. TETTAMANTI (Argentina) said that his delegation had played a substantial part in the preparation of the amendment submitted by eleven Latin American Powers (A/SPC/L.40), which had recommended that special attention should be paid in the first place to the qualifications that the President of the General Assembly must possess and that the principle of equitable geographical distribution should be upheld to the greatest possible extent. As, however, the sub-amendment (A/SPC/L.42/Rev.1) had not permitted that formulation to stand, the Argentine delegation had voted against the amendment. The representative of the United Arab Republic, in reply to a request by the representative of Mexico, had, to be sure, explained (168th meeting) that the sub-amendment submitted by his delegation and that of Guinea (A/SPC/L.42/Rev.1) had also attributed a certain priority to the personal qualifications of the President, but since there was no statement whatever to that effect in the text itself, the procedure of relying on the record of the meeting for an interpretation seemed too risky. Once the text of document A/SPC/L.40, which, by contrast, had appeared to be perfectly clear, had been amended, the Argentine delegation had abstained from voting on the sub-amendment submitted by France (A/SPC/L.41) despite the positive element that that sub-amendment had contained. For the same reasons, after having taken a position in favour of the sub-amendment submitted orally by Italy, which could have restored the upset balance if it had been accepted, the Argentine delegation had voted against the draft resolution as a whole.

14. U ON SEIN (Burma) said that he understood the reasons that had induced the delegations of Czechoslovakia and Romania to submit their draft resolution (A/SPC/L.39), as he believed that the principle of equitable geographical distribution had not always been observed in the United Nations. Nevertheless, he had been unable to support the original text because it failed to mention, as the decisive criterion, the personal qualifications of the President. The Latin American amendment (A/SPC/L.40) had seemed to be an improvement over the original text. His delegation had voted for the sub-amendment in document A/SPC/L.42/Rev.1, which had improved the text still further, and for the amended draft resolution as a whole. It had been unable to vote for the sub-amendment submitted by France (A/SPC/L.41) or for the Italian verbal amendment.

15. Mr. TOWNSEND (Peru) recalled that his delegation had been one of the sponsors of the draft amendment (A/SPC/L.40), in which the four principles which it held dear had been clearly embodied. In the first place, the Peruvian delegation recognized the right of persons from any Member State to be elected to the highest offices in the United Nations, and especially to the presidency of the General Assembly. Moreover, the personal qualifications of the candidate had to be the fundamental criterion. Equitable geographical representation was desirable, but it should not be applied rigidly, nor should it take precedence over a candidate's abilities and experience. Lastly, it would always be necessary to take into account the prevailing atmosphere at the time of each election. As all the sub-amendments had weakened the assertion of those principles by attempting to modify the substance of the text proposed in the Latin American amendment, the Peruvian delegation had either voted against them or had abstained.

16. In conclusion, he wished to express his delegation's gratitude to all the representatives who, during the debate, had spoken in praise of Mr. Belaúnde, the President of the General Assembly.

17. Mr. SUAREZ (Chile) recalled that the Chilean delegation had been one of the sponsors of the amendment in document A/SPC/L.40, which, while it had taken into account the criterion of equitable geographical distribution, had emphasized the personal qualifications of candidates for the presidency of the General Assembly. The Chilean delegation had had to vote against the sub-amendment contained in document A/SPC/L.42/Rev.1, which had disrupted that desirable balance, and against the draft resolution as a whole, into which that sub-amendment had been incorporated. It had, on the other hand, voted in favour of the sub-amendment of France (A/SPC/L.41) and the verbal sub-amendment of Italy, which would have enabled the balance to be restored.

18. Mr. ASHA (United Arab Republic), in reply to the comments of certain representatives, confirmed that the delegations of the United Arab Republic and Guinea had accepted the interpretation that the sub-amendment which they had submitted (A/SPC/L.42/Rev.1) gave precedence to the criterion of the personal qualifications of the President over that of equitable geographical distribution.

19. In reply to the representative of Argentina, he pointed out that it was customary to rely on the record for the interpretation of a resolution.

AGENDA ITEM 27

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (A/SPC/L.38/Rev.1) (*continued*)*

- (a) Report of the Director of the Agency (A/4213);
- (b) Proposals for the continuation of United Nations assistance to Palestine refugees: document submitted by the Secretary-General (A/4121)

20. Mr. EINAAR (Netherlands) proposed that the resumption of consideration of agenda item 27 should be postponed for twenty-four hours to permit certain delegations to consult their Governments.

*Resumed from the 162nd meeting.

21. Mr. QUENTIN-BAXTER (New Zealand) and Mr. BEELEY (United Kingdom) supported the proposal.

22. Mr. LAPIAN (Indonesia) proposed that those delegations which were ready to speak should be permitted to do so.

23. Mr. BAIG (Pakistan) supported the proposal.

It was so decided.

24. Mr. LAPIAN (Indonesia) recalled that all those who had spoken on the matter under consideration had favoured extending the mandate of UNRWA so that it could continue its excellent work. However, certain delegations, including those of the States directly concerned, had been unable to reach agreement on various details relating to the Agency's work and on several other matters. That had been the reason for the fragmentary character of the draft resolution (A/SPC/L.38) submitted to the Committee. Its sponsors, the Indonesian and Pakistan delegations, had hoped that it would enable the Committee to proceed from the abstract to the concrete and would lead to consultations on certain matters at issue.

25. Guided by considerations of a humanitarian, psychological and administrative nature, the sponsors of the draft resolution had in the first place envisaged a five-year extension of the Agency's mandate. The Director of UNRWA had indicated that its services would continue to be needed for at least a decade, while the Secretary-General had advocated an indefinite extension of the Agency's mandate. The Indonesian and Pakistan delegations had felt, however, that the acceptance of either of those proposals might produce, among the refugees, feelings of uncertainty and possibly even despair that could undermine the stability of the entire area. It had, in short, been their view that the refugees must be given hope that their unfortunate plight would be eased in less than ten years.

26. The sponsors of the draft resolution had taken advantage of the time that had elapsed since the Committee's wise decision to suspend the debate on the Palestine refugee problem; the revised draft resolution (A/SPC/L.38/Rev.1) was the result of their efforts and of the conversations they had held. They hoped that those efforts would not prove to have been in vain and that the countries directly concerned—in particular, the host countries and the principal contributing countries—would be able to accept the revised text in the spirit of understanding and harmony characteristic of the work of the United Nations.

27. Mr. BAIG (Pakistan) recalled the considerations which had prompted him to submit the draft resolution (A/SPC/L.38) on behalf of his own and the Indonesian delegations. The object had been to incorporate in it only the barest minimum of common agreement in the Committee and to avoid all controversial issues. The draft resolution had confined itself to the immediate problem, that of continuing to provide relief to Palestine refugees through UNRWA, regarding which there was universal agreement. The original draft resolution had served as the basis for successful conversations, which had resulted in the new version. The revised draft resolution contained, in particular, a formula for extending the mandate of UNRWA that would be acceptable to the Arab countries and the principal contributing countries. His delegation, therefore, hoped that the Committee would adopt

the revised draft resolution unanimously. He was happy that a satisfactory conclusion had been reached in a difficult problem and hoped that the foundations of co-operation thus laid would be strengthened in the future.

28. Mr. TETTAMANTI (Argentina) paid a tribute to the Director of the Agency. Recalling the tragic plight of the Palestine refugees, more than half of whom were children or adolescents and thus the victims of historical events for which they had been in no way responsible, he said that the continuation of United Nations assistance constituted a humanitarian obligation. His delegation therefore agreed with the Secretary-General that the Agency's mandate should be extended. To do so could, however, be no more than a palliative measure. In view of the conditions in which the refugees lived and the limited resources of UNRWA, other means must be sought to prevent the existing situation from continuing. To be sure, only the Governments in the area, when they were prepared to fulfil their obligations in a concrete, realistic manner, could bring about a final solution of the problem. However, that in no way lessened the responsibility of the United Nations, and a final solution of the Palestine refugee problem must be based on General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

29. His delegation would examine the revised draft resolution (A/SPC/L.38/Rev.1) in the light of those considerations, while at the same time taking into account the explanations given the Committee by the sponsors of the draft resolution.

30. Mr. HANCHER (United States of America) said that, on the whole, his delegation supported the revised draft resolution as a compromise solution and hoped that the delicate balance which it made possible would not be upset. Extending the Agency's mandate for a period of three years was a realistic measure, and the decision to rectify the ration lists was welcomed by his delegation. It hoped that the Conciliation Commission, which had already done constructive work in appraising and identifying the refugees' property, would be able to take prompt action to arrive at a solution. His delegation was convinced that something could be done along those lines. It hoped further that progress towards a peaceful solution could be made in the coming months and that the Member States which had declared themselves in favour of extending the Agency's mandate would give it greater financial support.

31. Mr. NASIR (Jordan) said that, while he was fully appreciative of the effort that had gone into the proposals contained in the draft resolution, the solution which they represented was only a temporary one. His delegation hoped that the problem would be solved before the expiration of the extension period, and it was in that hope that it would support the revised draft resolution. He thanked all those delegations which had expressed sympathy for the Palestine refugees.

32. Mr. JHA (India) said that he supported the revised draft resolution, which represented a compromise solution. His delegation would, moreover, have been prepared to accept a five-year extension of the Agency's mandate. The draft resolution was inspired by the humanitarian considerations which had been stressed earlier by his delegation as the core of the problem. He was glad that the principle

enunciated in paragraph 11 of resolution 194 (III) had been upheld, and he hoped that the efforts of the Conciliation Commission would result in progress towards a solution.

33. Mr. LOURIE (Israel) noted that the draft resolution had been referred to as a compromise, but he

wished to point out that it was a compromise to which his delegation was not a party. He reserved the right to make a further statement at a later stage in the debate.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.