



Chairman: Mr. Carlos GIAMBRUNO
(Uruguay).

AGENDA ITEM 49

Human rights in armed conflicts (*continued*):

- (b) **Protection of journalists engaged in dangerous missions in areas of armed conflict: report of the Secretary-General (*continued*)* (A/8703, chap. XIV, sect. B; A/8777 and Add.1 and 2, A/C.3/L.1952, A/C.3/L.1956, A/C.3/L.1958, A/C.3/L.1960, A/C.3/L.1961, A/C.3/L.1963/Rev.1, E/CN.4/1096)**

**DRAFT INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON
THE PROTECTION OF JOURNALISTS
ENGAGED IN DANGEROUS PROFESSIONAL
MISSIONS IN AREAS OF ARMED CONFLICT
(*continued*)**

1. Mr. KANGWA (Zambia) said that the majority of the non-aligned African, Asian and Latin American countries considered that it was preferable to wait until the twenty-eighth session of the General Assembly to adopt the draft convention on the protection of journalists engaged in dangerous missions in areas of armed conflict, in order to give Governments an opportunity to study the revised text (A/C.3/L.1963/Rev.1) in detail. At the meeting of the representatives of those countries the opinion had also been expressed that the sponsors should be afforded every opportunity at the current meeting to explain their draft and to indicate their reasons for considering it an urgent matter that it should be adopted at the current session. If the reasons put forward did not alter the view of the majority, a draft resolution calling for the postponement of the question to the twenty-eighth session would be submitted.

2. Mr. VAURS (France) requested the suspension of the meeting to permit the sponsors who had only just been informed of the opinion of the majority of the non-aligned Latin American, African and Asian countries, to consult each other.

The meeting was suspended at 11.20 a.m. and resumed at 12.10 p.m.

3. Mr. VAURS (France) reviewed the reasons for the Third Committee's study of the draft convention. The primary reason was that what was at stake was

* Resumed from the 1943rd meeting.

an instrument dictated by humanitarian considerations which was consistent with the great tradition of the Third Committee. Moreover, considerable preparatory work had been done on the draft. The General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on Human Rights had been discussing the question of the protection of journalists engaged in dangerous missions in areas of armed conflict for two years, after recognizing the urgent need for an instrument on the subject, a need which had in fact been confirmed by events. Furthermore, in September 1971, a working group of experts comprising representatives of professional organizations of journalists had been set up under resolution 15 (XXVII) of the Commission on Human Rights. That group had drawn up a long report which contained a number of ideas, many of which had been incorporated in the current text. In resolution 2854 (XXVI), the General Assembly had requested the Commission on Human Rights to reconsider the preliminary text taking into consideration other drafts. In its resolution 6 (XXVIII) the Commission on Human Rights had approved as a basis for further work the text of a draft convention, which it had voted on article by article, then as a whole, and the importance of which had been recognized by the Economic and Social Council.

4. He stressed the fact that, at the current session, on the proposal of the representative of Greece and in agreement with the sponsors, his delegation had set up a working group open to all. That group had worked in a spirit of compromise and, after numerous consultations, had, on the basis of documents A/8777 and A/C.3/L.1950, prepared a draft in which a great number of the 48 amendments that had been submitted had been accommodated. That text (A/C.3/L.1963/Rev.1) was therefore not a new text. The improvements which had been made had led to useful clarifications and a better affirmation of the principles of the sovereignty of States. In fact, it was clearly stated that the possession of a card did not affect national laws with respect to the crossing of frontiers or the movement or residence of aliens, and that it conferred a protection that was only humanitarian in nature, and did not give journalists any new rights. In his view, the Third Committee should not repudiate its own efforts but should continue to work in accordance with its traditions.

5. Mr. SEKYIAMAH (Ghana) expressed the view that the draft articles before the Committee represented a great improvement on the initial text and that the Third Committee had done a great deal towards completing the work begun by the Commission on Human Rights. What was involved was a profoundly humanitarian question which had everyone's support.

Nevertheless, most delegations were not in a position to take a decision immediately and it had been proposed that the question should be deferred to the following session. His delegation and the delegations of Colombia, Guyana, Kenya, Swaziland and Uganda had prepared a draft resolution to that effect which would be communicated to the Secretariat so that the Committee could act on it at its next meeting. He then read out the draft resolution.¹

6. Mr. LÓPEZ (Colombia) said that his delegation concurred in the view expressed by the representative of Ghana; before the matter could be further considered, the Committee must wait for the text to be distributed.

7. Mr. LAVETT (Australia) agreed with the representative of France that it was desirable to continue work on the draft convention, since most delegations had recognized the need for that instrument. Postponement of the adoption of that text until the following session could mean that world public opinion would be less well informed because journalists would not be so well protected. The Committee should therefore try to resolve the problem without delay.

8. It had been stated that the goal was valid but that other objectives should be given higher priority. The

text before the Committee was the fruit of much effort and reflected compromises which had been achieved between positions which were initially a long way apart. That those compromises had been achieved at all testified to the importance Governments attached to the question. He thought that the Committee should take advantage of the progress achieved and not abandon a text that was almost complete for other objectives within the area of human rights in armed conflict which might perhaps not be achieved for a long time. The fear had also been expressed that the convention might affect the authority of States. Reference to article 13 proved that that was not at all the case. In his opinion that article should dissipate any doubts expressed by delegations. He concluded with the hope that the Committee would continue its study of the draft convention.

9. After an exchange of views between Mr. SEKYIAMAH (Ghana) and Mrs. WARZAZI (Morocco), the CHAIRMAN suggested that, before pursuing its study of the question, the Committee should wait until it had before it the draft resolution read out by the representative of Ghana.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.

¹ Subsequently circulated as document A/C.3/L.1968.