



Tenth session

QUESTION OF THE CORRECTION OF VOTES IN  
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND ITS COMMITTEES

Report of the Secretary-General

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Paragraphs</u>
Introduction . . . . .	1-8
Chapter I. Methods of voting and prevention of errors .	9-70
Section 1. Vote by voice . . . . .	11-15
Section 2. Vote by show of hands . . . . .	16-21
Section 3. Vote by standing . . . . .	22-30
Section 4. Vote by roll-call . . . . .	31-41
Section 5. Vote by division . . . . .	42-45
Section 6. Vote by ballot . . . . .	46-54
Section 7. Vote by electrical equipment . .	55-70
Chapter II. Rules governing the announcement of the results of votes and their application . . .	71-77
Chapter III. The problem of corrections of votes . . . .	78-97
Section 1. Corrections of clerical errors .	78-84
Section 2. Request by members for correction of their votes before results have been proclaimed . . . . .	85-92
Section 3. Request by members for correction of their votes after the results have been proclaimed . . . . .	93-97
Chapter IV. Conclusions . . . . .	98-105

## INTRODUCTION

1. On 14 December 1954, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the Sixth Committee, adopted resolution 901 (IX) whereby the Assembly, considering that its rules of procedure contained no rule on the announcement by the President of the results of votes or the circumstances in which representatives of States Members might be permitted to correct the positions taken by them during a ballot, expressed the belief that it was desirable that this question should be studied and settled.

2. The General Assembly felt that it would be useful to obtain information concerning the existing rules and the generally accepted practices of other inter-governmental organizations and of national legislative assemblies.

3. To that end, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report at its tenth session:

"(a) On the terms and application of the rules which in other inter-governmental organizations and in parliaments govern the announcement of the results of votes, on the conditions subject to which corrections are admitted and on the consequences of such corrections;

"(b) On possible provisions designed to prevent and correct any mistakes which might occur during the voting procedure in the General Assembly and its Committees."

4. As stated by the rapporteur of the Sixth Committee at the 512th plenary meeting, it was intended by the Committee that the Secretary-General should be given full latitude under the terms of the resolution to collect the information as he deemed fit and to undertake consultations to the extent he might consider necessary.

5. In pursuance of the above resolution, the Secretary-General, on 22 March 1955, addressed communications to the Secretaries-General of the Arab League, of the Council of Europe and of the Organization of American States, to the Directors-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Labour Organisation, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Health Organization, to the Secretary-General of the International Civil Aviation Organization, as well as to all Members of the

United Nations, requesting them to transmit to him any data which might be helpful for the preparation of the report requested by the General Assembly.

6. In response to the Secretary-General's request, replies were received from all the inter-governmental organizations mentioned above with the exception of the Arab League. Information was also submitted by the following Member States regarding the provisions of relevant rules existing in their parliamentary organs, accompanied in many cases by additional material relating to the practices of those organs: Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Burma, Canada, Chile, China, Costa Rica, Cuba, Denmark, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, India, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sweden, Syria, Thailand, Turkey, the Union of South Africa, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Yugoslavia.

7. In a letter dated 31 March 1955, the Secretary-General of the French National Assembly stated that some of the questions referred to in resolution 901 (IX) had been studied by the Autonomous Section of the Secretaries-General of Parliaments, an organ of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and he proposed that the secretaries-general of parliaments should furnish documentation and information which might be useful for the preparation of the report. The Secretary-General indicated that he would be glad to receive all relevant data. The Secretary-General of the French National Assembly transmitted a compilation of the data which had been collected, covering the procedure followed by the Assembly of the European Steel and Coal Community and by the parliaments of the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

8. The present report, which is based on the information thus received, is divided into three chapters: chapter I deals with the methods of voting used in assemblies and the means used to prevent errors in voting; chapter II describes the rules governing the announcement of the results of votes and their application; chapter III deals with the problem of correction of votes. Finally, conclusions are contained in chapter IV.

## CHAPTER I

### METHODS OF VOTING AND PREVENTION OF ERRORS

9. Various methods of voting exist in assemblies and parliaments ranging from a simple vote by voice, where no counting is made, to the more elaborate form of voting by roll-call or by ballot, where both the votes and the voters are checked.

10. To the older methods (votes by voice, by show of hands, by standing, by division, by roll-call and by ballot) modern times have added a new one, the vote by means of an electric machine. These methods are described below, together with the various means used to prevent errors in each method.

#### Section 1. Vote by voice

11. In this method, members express by voice their assent or dissent and the Chairman judges from the voices the sense of their decision; he then announces either that "the Ayes have it" or "the Noes have it" and the records show simply that the motion was passed or defeated, as the case may be, no record of the names or number of assenting or dissenting members being made.

12. This method is not provided for by the rules of procedure of the organs of the United Nations or other inter-governmental organizations.

13. In practice, however, a similar system exists in the General Assembly and its Committees. When the President or Chairman feels that a proposal does not meet with any objection, he declares without putting the question to a formal vote, that "if there is no objection, the proposal is adopted". The same procedure is sometimes used for elections of officers in Committees; in this case the candidates are elected by acclamation.

14. Voting by voice is used mainly in the Commonwealth countries. It is used also in Burma, China, in Ireland, in the Philippines and in the United States.

15. It is left to the judgment of the presiding officer to decide whether a motion has been adopted or not, but the opinion of the Chairman as to the

result of the voting by voice may be challenged.<sup>1/</sup> In this case the vote is repeated but a different system is used, either a vote by standing,<sup>2/</sup> or by division,<sup>3/</sup> or by show of hands,<sup>4/</sup> or by roll-call.<sup>5/</sup>

## Section 2. Vote by show of hands

16. Usually, in a vote by show of hands members who are in favour of a proposal are requested to raise their hands first; those who are against either raise their hands next, or do not raise their hands at all.<sup>6/</sup> In many parliaments abstentions are not recorded; when they are, this is usually done last.

17. The vote by show of hands is a normal method of voting in the General Assembly (rule 89), its Committees (rule 128), the Security Council (by practice), the Trusteeship Council (rule 39), the Economic and Social Council (rule 61), the organs of specialized agencies and in most national parliaments.

18. In the General Assembly and its Committees the counting of the votes<sup>7/</sup> is done by one member of the Secretariat (for the General Assembly, the Executive Assistant to the Secretary-General; for the Committees, the Secretary)

---

<sup>1/</sup> By any member in the House of Representatives of Australia, in the Parliament of Burma, in the Dail and the Seanad of Ireland, in the Senate of the Philippines and the Senate and House of Assembly of South Africa; by two members in the Senate of Australia.

<sup>2/</sup> In the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha of India; in the Parliament of Pakistan.

<sup>3/</sup> In India and Pakistan (the Speaker may choose between a vote by standing and a vote by division) and the Commonwealth countries.

<sup>4/</sup> In the Legislative Yuan of China and the Senate of the Philippines.

<sup>5/</sup> In the United States Senate.

<sup>6/</sup> Such is the case in the Senate of Cuba.

Article 101 of the rules of procedure of the Legislative Assembly of Guatemala specifies that the voting by show of hands shall be done by raising the right hand.

In the plenary and committee meetings of WHO, members raise the cards bearing the names of their countries.

<sup>7/</sup> Sometimes in a vote by show of hands the votes are not counted, but this is the exception; for example, section 16-a of the rules of procedure of the Knesset of Israel provides that "if it is evident to the speaker that the proposition which was being voted on received a majority, or was rejected by a majority, the votes are not counted;" if the result is not clear the votes are counted by the Secretary-General of the Knesset or by one of his deputies.

sometimes with the help of their members. There are some assemblies however which provide that the counting be done by two<sup>8/</sup> or even three<sup>9/</sup> members of the secretariat, or by the President together with secretaries<sup>10/</sup> or by tellers appointed by the presiding officer.<sup>11/</sup>

19. In the General Assembly and its Committees, if the result of a vote by show of hands appears doubtful, on some occasions a vote has been repeated by the same system, either at the request of a representative or on the initiative of the presiding officer.<sup>12/</sup>

20. In other bodies in most cases a vote by show of hands which appears doubtful to the Chairman, or is challenged by a representative, is repeated by another system of voting, either a vote by standing<sup>13/</sup> or a roll-call vote.<sup>14/</sup>

---

<sup>8/</sup> In the Conference of FAO the counting is done by two members of the secretariat and if the results do not tally, there is a recount. In the House of Representatives of Syria, two secretaries are responsible for counting the votes, and if a discrepancy appears the vote is repeated.

<sup>9/</sup> At the plenary and committee meetings of WHO, three members of the secretariat, each covering an assigned part of the conference room, proceed to the counting, and the separate results are indicated to the President, who totals them.

<sup>10/</sup> Chamber of Deputies of Iraq and Turkish Parliament.

<sup>11/</sup> In the Knesset of Israel (on some occasions).

<sup>12/</sup> Another vote by the same system is taken in the Council of the Organization of American States and in Syria (but if the secretaries still disagree after the second vote, a roll-call vote is taken); in the Senate of Cuba a vote by show of hands may be verified by the reverse procedure, i.e. those against raising their hands and those in favour not raising their hands. In the Knesset of Israel, if a member were to express doubt as to the accuracy of the result and to ask for a recount, it is likely, according to the information received, that the Speaker would grant the request.

<sup>13/</sup> Such is the case in the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe (rule 34), in the Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community (article 33), in the House of Representatives of Chile (article 165), in the French National Assembly (article 77) and Council of the Republic (article 69), in the Legislative Assembly of Guatemala (article 101), in the Turkish Parliament (article 134) and in the Chamber of Deputies of Iraq; but in the last named case it may be noted that voting by show of hands and voting by standing are combined, a deputy voting in the affirmative may either raise a hand while sitting or may stand up.

<sup>14/</sup> Such is the case in the International Labour Conference (article 19, para. 4; article 65, para. 6); and in the General Conference of UNESCO (rule 84).

21. Some rules of procedure provide that, in case the result of the second vote is also doubtful, a third vote must then be taken by a system different from the first two votes.<sup>15/</sup>

### Section 3. Vote by standing

22. In a vote by standing members in favour of a proposal rise from their seats; those against either rise from their seats after the votes in favour have been counted, or remain seated.

23. The rules of procedure of the General Assembly (rule 89) and its Committees (rule 128) list the vote by standing among their normal voting procedures; however, in practice, the vote by standing has not been used by the General Assembly or its Committees.

24. The vote by standing is unknown to other organs of the United Nations, to ILO, to the Executive Board of UNESCO and to the Executive Board of WHO.

25. On the other hand, the vote by standing is provided for in the rules of procedure of several specialized agencies<sup>16/</sup> and of many national parliaments.<sup>17/</sup>

26. The counting of the votes is done in the same way as in a vote by show of hands.

---

<sup>15/</sup> Article 33 of the rules of the Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community and article 165 of the rules of the House of Representatives of Chile provide that a roll-call vote shall be taken after a vote by show of hands has been unsuccessfully repeated by a vote by standing; in France, if the secretaries still disagree after the second vote or if a senator (or a deputy) requests it after the first vote, a vote by open ballot is taken.

<sup>16/</sup> General Conference of UNESCO (rule 83); Assembly of ICAO (rule 47); FAO (rule XII); WHO (rule 66).

<sup>17/</sup> Belgium (Senate, article 28; House of Representatives, article 57); Brazil (Senate, rule 159; Chamber of Deputies, rule 139); Chamber of Deputies of Chile (article 145); Assembly of Costa Rica (article 50); Chamber of Deputies of Finland (article 45); Haiti (Senate, article 10; Chamber of Deputies, article 64); Majlis of Iran (article 147); Chamber of Deputies of Luxembourg (article 63 of the Constitution, article 27 of the rules of procedure of the Chamber of Deputies); First Chamber of the States-General of the Netherlands (article 31) and Riksdag of Sweden.

27. In Belgium and in Luxembourg, it is customary in doubtful cases to verify a vote by standing by a contre épreuve,<sup>18/</sup> that is, a new count is taken in which those members who formerly remained seated are asked to stand and vice versa. If the result is still doubtful the vote and the contre épreuve are repeated.

28. In the Chamber of Deputies of Brazil, rule 140 of the rules of procedure provides that any deputy who entertains any doubt as to the announced result of a vote by standing shall immediately request verification. If twenty deputies rise in support of the request, the votes are thereupon counted, each complete row of seats in the chamber being polled in turn. The President requests all deputies voting in favour to rise while one of the secretaries announces the result as each row is counted. The same procedure is adopted in counting votes against unless there is already an absolute majority of votes in favour. Finally, when all the votes have been recorded, the President declares the result of the count as a whole.

29. But in most cases a vote by standing which has led to a doubtful result is verified by, a vote by division,<sup>19/</sup> a roll-call vote<sup>20/</sup> or by a vote by ballot.<sup>21/</sup>

30. In two cases, at least, the Chamber of Deputies of Finland and the Riksdag of Sweden, the electric voting machine is used when the vote by standing has not led to a clear result.<sup>22/</sup>

---

<sup>18/</sup> In the Senate of Brazil a similar system is used when the result of a vote by standing is not obvious, or if any senator so requests. The secretaries count the votes of those who rose and thereafter the votes of those who remained seated, who for this purpose in their turn rise when asked to do so by the President (rule 160).

<sup>19/</sup> Chamber of Deputies of Italy (rule 99), when the issue remains in doubt after a record has been made.

<sup>20/</sup> General Conference of UNESCO (rule 84); Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community (article 33); Belgium and Luxembourg, after the vote by standing and the reverse procedure have been repeated without success; Folketing of Denmark; Vouli of Greece (article 71); Senate and Chamber of Deputies of Haiti (article 64).

<sup>21/</sup> Majlis of Iran (article 152).

<sup>22/</sup> Finland (article 45, as modified in 1949 and 1954); Sweden (article 4 of the Riksdag Regulations of 23 March 1949).



Section 4. Vote by roll-call

31. Voting by roll-call is provided for by rule 89 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly (corresponding to rule 128 in the Committees) and is taken in the English alphabetical order of the names of the Members, beginning with the Member whose name is drawn by lot from a special box by the President; the name of each Member is called by the Executive Assistant (or in Committees by the Secretary); representatives reply "Yes" or "No" or "Abstention" as the case may be. If no reply is heard, the name is repeated, and if again there is no reply, that Member is considered as absent. In certain cases Members have answered that they were not participating in the vote. The vote of each Member is marked by the Secretariat on a special form containing the names of Members in English alphabetical order next to three columns headed "Yes", "No", "Abstention". Upon conclusion of the roll-call, totals are made in each column and the result communicated to the presiding officer.

32. The roll-call vote is also used in other organs of the United Nations,<sup>23/</sup> in the specialized agencies and in other inter-governmental organizations, and is fairly common in national parliaments.

33. Voting by roll-call usually requires a special request,<sup>24/</sup> as in the General Assembly and its Committees;<sup>25/</sup> this is also true of inter-governmental organizations and of national parliaments.<sup>26/</sup>

<sup>23/</sup> The rules of procedure of the Security Council are silent as to the possibility of voting by roll-call; in practice, voting in the Security Council is done by show of hands but, the vote of each member has sometimes been included in the verbatim record.

<sup>24/</sup> The First Chamber of the States General of the Netherlands, however, uses roll-calls as the ordinary procedure.

<sup>25/</sup> This is also the case in specialized agencies.

<sup>26/</sup> Inter alia, in the Legislative Assembly of El Salvador (article 38), in addition, in the Assembly of Costa Rica (article 53) "a roll-call vote shall be taken only if one or more deputies request it and the Assembly so decides"; and in the Federal People's Assembly of Yugoslavia (article 32) "the voting by roll-call is decided by the President, when he considers it necessary in order to ascertain the exact result of the voting or at the request of ten deputies"; in the Riksdag of Sweden a roll-call is taken only when the electric voting machine is out of order.

34. In the General Assembly and its Committees the rules do not provide for the use of the vote by roll-call after a vote has been taken by show of hands or by standing.<sup>27/</sup>

35. On the other hand, rule 84 of the rules of procedure of the General Conference of UNESCO provides that a request for a roll-call shall be made before voting takes place or immediately after a vote by show of hands or by standing; and article 19 of the Standing Orders of the International Labour Conference provides that in case of doubt as to the result of a vote by show of hands, the President may cause a roll-call vote to be taken.

36. In some assemblies and parliaments voting by roll-call is compulsory on certain matters.<sup>28/</sup>

37. The procedure adopted by the General Assembly in conducting a roll-call vote is followed with minor variations by inter-governmental organizations and national parliaments.<sup>29/</sup>

<sup>27/</sup> In the World Health Assembly, in which the rules are similar, a delegate on one occasion (Seventh World Health Assembly, 10th plenary meeting) requested a vote by roll-call after a vote by show of hands had led to a tie. He was supported by other delegates. One of them pointed out that "in a number of international organizations permission to take a roll-call vote... can be accorded after a vote by show of hands, particularly when the latter has resulted in a tie, in order to avoid the possibility of the proposal being rejected owing to a miscount of the votes". The Chairman, however, was of the opinion that "the vote was completed", so that another vote on the matter would require a two-thirds majority; a delegate stated that the vote had quite definitely been taken, and the Assembly finally decided not to vote again (Official Records of the World Health Organization, No. 55, Seventh World Health Assembly, pp. 155-157).

<sup>28/</sup> For example, in the Council of Europe (rule 34, para. 4) "the vote on a draft recommendation or resolution considered as a whole shall in all cases be taken by roll-call". In Belgium and in Luxembourg, a vote must be taken by roll-call on the whole of a bill (Belgium: Senate, article 28, House of Representatives, article 57). In the Senate of Cuba (rule 112) "a roll-call shall be taken on every bill or draft resolution as a whole". In the Federal Chamber of the People's Assembly of Yugoslavia (article 54) "voting on changes in the Constitution is carried out by roll-call".

<sup>29/</sup> In some instances, one secretary records the votes cast in favour and another the votes against (Chamber of Deputies of Brazil, rule 141; Legislative Assembly of Guatemala, rule 102; House of Representatives of Japan). In the Assembly of FAO, the answers are recorded by two members of the secretariat. In the Senate of Brazil the second secretary records the votes as the third secretary calls the roll (rule 161). In the Vouli of Greece the secretary who calls out the name of each deputy records the presence or absence and the vote of each deputy under the supervision of tellers selected by the President.

38. In the First Chamber of the States-General of the Netherlands the clerk records the votes of the members "for" or "against" on a special voting record list, but he also uses a list containing two columns of numbers each under the heading "for" and "against" which permits an immediate tally of the votes by crossing out a number in the corresponding column after each vote; after checking the two lists the President announces the results of the vote.<sup>30/</sup>

39. Another variation appears in rule XII of the Assembly of FAO where, at the conclusion of any roll-call, the names of member nations whose delegates have failed to answer are called again.<sup>31/</sup>

40. Some assemblies combine the roll-call vote with other systems of voting like the vote by standing or by ballot. For example, two methods are used in the Chamber of Deputies of Iraq when voting by roll-call. The first method is as follows: one of the two clerks reads the names of deputies in their alphabetical order, starting with a deputy whose name has been drawn by lot. Each deputy whose name is called proceeds to give his vote standing. A plus sign is placed against the name of a deputy voting in the affirmative and a minus sign against the name of a deputy voting in the negative. Under the second method, each deputy is handed two cards (with the deputy's name printed thereon), one white card for an affirmative and one red card for a negative vote. When his name is called, the deputy proceeds to the box placed in front of the President's seat and inserts therein a white or red card. At the conclusion of this process the box is opened, and the result is determined by the respective numbers of white and red cards.<sup>32/</sup>

---

<sup>30/</sup> A similar tally sheet is used in the House of Commons of Canada.

<sup>31/</sup> A similar practice is followed by the Chamber of Deputies of Brazil where deputies arriving at the meeting after their names have been called wait until the end of the roll has been reached, at which time they are called upon by the President to declare their votes.

<sup>32/</sup> The Parliament of Turkey also follows these two alternative systems, except that deputies are provided with three ballot papers, one white, one red and one green, corresponding respectively to a vote for, a vote against or an abstention. In the House of Representatives of Japan, each deputy is provided with a white and a blue wooden ticket; a deputy in favour of a motion gives his white wooden ticket to secretary A; one who is against gives his blue wooden ticket to secretary B; and secretaries A and B cast the tickets into separate ballot boxes.

41. In one instance a mechanical device is used in connexion with a roll-call vote. In the plenary meeting of the International Labour Conference delegates may ensure the correct recording of their votes by the following method: a board is set up in the conference room in a location where every delegate can see it; three lights on this board - red, blue and white - correspond respectively to an affirmative vote, a negative vote or an abstention. When the registrar calls the delegate's name, the delegate replies "Yes", ["No", "Abstention"]; the registrar then repeats "Yes" ["No", "Abstention"] and switches on the corresponding light. At the same time the assistant registrar compares the vote, which he has also recorded, with the registrar's record. If they disagree, the registrar calls the delegate's name again. The light remains on for a sufficiently long period of time to permit the delegate to see if his vote has been correctly recorded. If the delegate does not object immediately, his vote is considered final; but if the delegate declares that he voted differently, the correction is announced by the registrar, who switches on the corresponding light.

#### Section 5. Vote by division

42. Voting by division is unknown to the United Nations, is used mostly in Commonwealth countries. In England, in the House of Commons, the procedure is as follows: the Speaker first puts the question to a voice vote and, if his opinion as to the result is challenged, he directs that the two division lobbies be cleared. After the lapse of two minutes he puts the question again, and, if his opinion is again challenged, he announces the names of tellers (two for the "Ayes", two for the "Noes"). Members take part in the division by walking through one or the other of the two lobbies; the names of members passing through each lobby are recorded by officers of the House called division clerks and the numbers are counted by tellers. Six minutes after the division has begun, the doors giving access to the division lobbies are locked, on instructions from the Chair. When all the Members voting have been counted, the tellers re-enter the House and state the numbers in the division to a clerk at the table, who writes them on a paper. The tellers then come up to the table of the House with this paper and one of the tellers on the majority side reads aloud the numbers. The division paper is then handed to the occupant of the Chair who repeats aloud the numbers and states the

determination of the House. Division lists showing members voting "Aye" and "No" are subsequently published with the next issue of the Vote and Proceedings (Minutes) and in the Reports of Debates.

43. The procedure is followed with no substantial difference in the parliaments of the Commonwealth countries,<sup>33/</sup> Burma and Ireland.

44. In the Federal Republic of Germany, there is in addition a lobby for abstentions and, in order to avoid errors, lighted signs "For", "Against", "Abstentions" are placed above each door.

45. In Italy, when voting by division, the President invites all members who are in favour of the matter to be decided to stand on one side of the Chamber, and those against it on the other. The numbers are counted by the secretaries.

#### Section 6. Vote by ballot

46. In the General Assembly, the rules provide that all elections must be held by secret ballot (rule 94, corresponding rule in the Committees, rule 105); in that case the President designates two tellers from among representatives. One ballot paper is distributed by conference officers to each delegation and a member of the delegation inscribes the name of the State or person for whom he intends to vote. A ballot box is placed in front of the rostrum and the Executive Secretary calls the names of Member States in the English alphabetical order beginning with the Member whose name is drawn by lot by the President. The representatives deposit their ballots in the box in the presence of the tellers, and when the voting is completed the box is carried to a special table in the Assembly Hall. The box is opened in the presence of the tellers, who count the votes with the assistance of members of the Secretariat, and communicate the result to the President who makes the announcement.

47. This system does not differ substantially from that used by other assemblies and parliaments.

---

<sup>33/</sup> However, in the House of Commons of Canada, when a vote by division is taken, those who are in favour rise from their seats one after the other and one of the assistant clerks calls out their names as they rise. The Clerk of the House then records the votes by entering a mark opposite each name on a "division list" on which the members' names are printed in alphabetical order, repeating in a loud voice each name as he places a mark against it. The members resume their seats as they hear their names repeated by the Clerk. The members vote by rows. After all the "Yeas" have voted, the voting proceeds with the "Nays" in a similar manner.

48. In some assemblies, when a secret ballot is used for a matter other than elections, balls of different colours are used instead of ballot papers. For example, rule 162 of the Senate of Brazil and article 52 of the Assembly of Costa Rica provide that a vote by secret ballot shall be carried out by means of ballot balls, each senator dropping into the urn a white ball if he is in favour, or a black ball if he is against.<sup>34/</sup>

49. In the Vouli of Greece balls are also used as a means of checking the number of votes cast against the number of members voting; if there is no discrepancy the President announces the result; if there is any discrepancy a recount is made.<sup>35/</sup>

50. The presence of tellers to supervise the voting procedure is compulsory in some parliaments.<sup>36/</sup>

51. Voting by ballot usually means voting by secret ballot but it can also be a vote by "open" ballot, as in France and in Turkey.<sup>37/</sup>

---

<sup>34/</sup> In the Chamber of Deputies of Italy a similar system exists. Members vote by placing in two urns, one white and one black, two small balls, one white and one black; the placing of the white ball in the white urn and of the black ball in the black urn signifies an affirmative vote, and the contrary procedure a negative vote.

<sup>35/</sup> In the Majlis of Iran also, when voting by ballot balls, each deputy has an additional ball which he drops in a special urn; the number of balls deposited in that urn indicates the number of deputies voting. In Iraq, each deputy is handed two balls and deposits one in a "voting" box and the other one in a "checking" box; the result of the vote is determined by the respective numbers of white and black balls found in the "voting" box; the purpose of counting the balls in the "checking" box is to ascertain whether their number is equal to that of the balls found in the "voting" box.

<sup>36/</sup> Article 35 of the First Chamber of the States General of the Netherlands provides that for every election the President shall appoint a committee of four members who shall act as tellers and who shall ascertain that the number of ballot papers does not exceed the number of members present, open the ballot papers, read the names and announce the result of the election.

<sup>37/</sup> A vote by "open" ballot is taken in Finland when the recording machine is out of order (article 45).

52. In the National Assembly of France,<sup>38/</sup> when there is a vote by open ballot, members vote by placing cards, each marked with the member's name, coloured white ("for") or blue ("against") in urns taken round the benches by messengers. Voting by proxy is permitted.

53. Under the French system, a deputy who wishes to abstain can place a white and a blue card in the box; as long as the voting is going on a deputy has the right to change his vote and deposit two more ballots (white, if he has previously voted blue). The cards are then quickly and summarily counted by the secretaries who deposit the cards in boxes holding 100, 50, 25 and 10 ballots. The count is checked in an adjoining room if the difference between the number of white and blue cards is twenty-five or less or if the number of cards found in the urns is greater than the number of members who could have voted. This operation of checking is known as pointage. A vote must also be checked if it is one for which an absolute majority is required, or if a request for checking is made by the president of a political group with not less than twenty-five members.

54. When requested by fifty or more members, the vote is taken by open ballot at the tribune. No vote by proxy is then allowed and only members present can vote. The name of every member is read in alphabetical order (starting with a name chosen by lot) each member mounting the tribune and giving a card to a secretary, by whom his name is noted. The cards are then counted, and the count checked; the entire procedure takes about an hour and a half. Elections are held by secret ballot.

#### Section 7. Vote by electrical equipment

##### (a) Parliaments where electrical voting equipment is used.

55. Electrical equipment for registering and recording votes is used in the Senate of Belgium, the Parliament of Finland, the Riksdag of Sweden and in numerous state legislatures of the United States (including the House of Assembly of New Jersey, where the officials responsible for the functioning of the equipment

---

<sup>38/</sup> The system is similar in the Council of the Republic. It is understood that certain minor changes in the voting procedure of the National Assembly have been introduced since the receipt of the information given herein.

were kind enough to demonstrate it for the information of members of the Secretariat. Use of such equipment is also envisaged in Brazil, and in France the National Assembly has received a favourable report on the subject but the technical aspect is still under study.

56. The equipment<sup>39/</sup> consists of buttons or switches at the desk of each representative, permitting the casting of votes in favour or against; a wall panel on which the votes of each representative and the totals are shown; and means by which the President may conduct the voting and be informed of the results. The results are recorded either by photography or by punching a card.

57. According to the information received, the vote by electrical equipment is fast (taking about ten seconds in the sixty-member New Jersey House of Assembly, thirty seconds in the Riksdag of Sweden, and up to three minutes in some state legislatures of the United States), and is also accurate. It has been completely satisfactory in, among other places, Belgium (where its installation in the House of Representatives is contemplated) and New Jersey.

58. In Finland and Sweden the rules contain provisions applicable if it should happen that the electrical equipment could not be used. In those circumstances the Parliament of Finland would vote by ballot<sup>40/</sup> and the Riksdag would use a roll-call.<sup>41/</sup>

(b) Previous consideration by the General Assembly of the  
use of electrical voting equipment

59. At the second part of the third session in 1949, the delegations of Denmark, Norway and Sweden proposed the creation of a committee to consider the methods and procedures of the General Assembly, and suggested that of the use of mechanical

---

<sup>39/</sup> An interesting description of electrical voting systems is found in Emile Blamont, "Essai comparatif sur les modes de votation en usage dans les principaux parlements", Revue du Droit public et de la Science politique en France et à l'Etranger, October-December 1950, p. 829.

<sup>40/</sup> Article 45.

<sup>41/</sup> Article 4 of the Riksdag Regulations of 23 March 1949.



and technical processes, in particular the electric voting system,<sup>42/</sup> should be studied.

60. By resolution 271 (III) of 29 April 1949, the Assembly created the Special Committee on Methods and Procedures of the General Assembly, which met in the summer of that year. When the Scandinavian suggestion was discussed in that Committee,<sup>43/</sup> it was observed by some representatives that electrical voting was very accurate and would save time. On the other hand, it was said that if the results of an electrical vote were questioned, a considerable waste of time would result; that it would be difficult to check the mechanical addition of votes; and that try-outs of mechanical voting in other international bodies had, in the main, not been satisfactory.

61. The Special Committee made no recommendation on the subject, but requested the Secretary-General to study the possibilities of installing electrical voting equipment, and later decided to annex the Secretary-General's memorandum on mechanical devices to the Special Committee's report to the General Assembly at its fourth session.<sup>44/</sup>

62. The Special Committee's report, containing the annex on mechanical devices, was referred to the Sixth Committee. In the discussion at the 156th meeting on 8 October 1949, it was felt that study should be continued by the appropriate technical and financial services. Consequently, the Sixth Committee recommended a paragraph, adopted by the General Assembly as part of resolution 362 (IV) of 22 October 1949, requesting

"... the Secretary-General to carry out appropriate studies and to submit, at such times as he may consider appropriate, suitable proposals for the improvement of the methods and procedures of the General Assembly and its Committees, including proposals to extend the use of mechanical and technical devices."

---

<sup>42/</sup> See Official Records of the General Assembly, Third Session, Part II, Plenary Meetings, Annexes, document A/825, p. 34.

<sup>43/</sup> Documents A/AC.30/SR.8, pp. 10-12; A/AC.30/SR.9, pp. 2-3; A/AC.30/SR.20, p. 9.

<sup>44/</sup> See Official Records of the General Assembly, Fourth Session, Supplement No. 12, document A/937, pp. 21-23.

(c) Possible system of electrical voting for the  
General Assembly and its Committees

63. As the result of studies carried out in accordance with General Assembly resolution 362 (IV) and brought up to date in connexion with the preparation of the present report, the Secretary-General can now give a fuller description of a possible electrical voting system for the General Assembly than was made in his memorandum of 1949. An electrical voting system would offer the possibility of a recorded vote equivalent to a roll-call, or an unrecorded vote equivalent to a show of hands; elections, which differ greatly in character, would continue to be held by secret ballot. The description which follows is not intended to settle all the details of the system, but rather to assist the Assembly's discussion by enabling representatives to know the various devices which are either presently used in the electrical voting equipment of parliamentary bodies or could easily be designed, thus permitting a detailed appreciation of the consequences of installation of such equipment. In the course of the description a distinction will be made between the basic essentials of the system and the possible refinements and elaborations which could be introduced.

64. If a recorded vote comparable to a roll-call was requested, the sequence of events would be as follows. First, the President would announce the beginning of the vote, and would turn on the system so as to permit votes to be cast. Then the representative of each Member would press one of three buttons on his desk, labelled respectively "Yes", "No" and "Abstention" in the working languages of the General Assembly. Next to each of these buttons there would be a light which, when a vote was cast, would be illuminated to confirm the registration of that vote. Each representative could change his vote at any time before the vote was concluded. The vote of each representative would be shown by means of lights of different colours on wall panels in the meeting-rooms and on a small replica of the wall panel set in the President's desk.

65. The voting could be concluded either by the President or automatically. In the latter event a fixed period, say thirty seconds or one minute, would be established for voting. The President would start the vote, but it would conclude after the lapse of the fixed period, without further intervention of the President. It would be possible to have numbers flash on the wall panel to indicate the

number of seconds left in the voting period. After the conclusion of the voting votes could no longer be changed. When the voting ended, the totals of votes in favour, votes against and abstentions would be automatically computed and would be shown by lighted numerals on the wall panels and at the desk of the President.<sup>45/</sup>

66. The President would then operate a control at his desk to bring about the recording of the vote. This would be done by an instrument near his desk, which would produce as many copies as were needed of a sheet or card recording the individual votes and the totals and identifying the proposal or amendment voted on by document number and, where appropriate, by paragraph number and part of the paragraph. This recording would be done by punching holes in the card or by photography. The result of the vote would then be announced by the President, who would clear the panels and either take the next vote or shut the system off.

67. In an unrecorded vote comparable to a show of hands, the procedure would be the same except that no record would be made by the recording instrument. The individual votes and the totals would appear on the wall panels and at the President's desk, and the totals would be taken down for the records either from the wall panels or the President's announcement.

68. Certain other information about an electrical voting system may be useful to the General Assembly. The mechanical reliability of such a system would be high, and lights at the President's desk would indicate whether the equipment was functioning properly. A considerable saving of the time of the Assembly could be effected by the use of electrical voting.<sup>46/</sup> It would be possible, if desired,

---

<sup>45/</sup> As a not strictly essential but possibly useful feature certain other information could be shown on the wall panel and at the President's desk, for example, the total number of votes cast, the total of affirmative and negative votes (a number on which, under rules 88 and 127 of the Assembly's rules of procedure, the calculation of the required majority is based), the number of Members which have not voted, etc.

<sup>46/</sup> For example, in the memorandum prepared by the Secretary-General in 1949 (see Official Records of the General Assembly, Fourth Session, Supplement No. 9, document A/937, pp. 21-23), it was estimated that at the first part of the third session of the Assembly the savings for the various Committees would have ranged from twelve hours and four minutes in the Third Committee to seventeen minutes in the Joint Second and Third Committee, and the grand total of possible savings at both parts of the third session, in plenary meetings and all Committees, was estimated at forty-eight hours and sixteen minutes.

to subject the equipment to a practical test by temporary installation in one conference room, and this could probably be done in time for the eleventh session of the Assembly.

69. Electrical voting equipment would be quite flexible; it could be used for purposes other than voting,<sup>47/</sup> it could be adjusted to the requirements of bodies smaller than the Assembly or the Main Committees, and it could readily be expanded in the event that other States became Members of the Assembly. Installation of such equipment would not necessarily interfere with the daily rotation of seating which is customary in Main Committees, as the appropriate changes could be made every day without difficulty.

70. The financial implications of providing electrical voting equipment for the General Assembly and its Committees are quite difficult to estimate with any exactitude, as such equipment would have to be specially designed for the purpose. Moreover, though a saving of time would undoubtedly be effected by the use of electrical equipment, it is equally difficult to estimate the financial implications of this saving. An approximate estimate made in 1949<sup>48/</sup> was that equipment for the General Assembly Hall would cost \$55,200 and for each of four conference rooms would cost \$54,000, or a total of \$271,200. The Secretary-General is pursuing his studies of the matter, and will present during the course of this session, as an addendum to the present report, a more precise estimate of the costs of provisional and permanent installation; the estimate will cover all the essential features of an electrical voting system as described above, and as many extra features as can be included without substantial extra cost. It may be that the estimate will be

---

<sup>47/</sup> For example, it could be used to determine the presence of a quorum. As each representative arrived at his place he would press the "Yes" button on his desk; the President would count the corresponding lights showing in front of him, or, in a more elaborate system, a special device could be used to compute a running total which would increase as each newly arriving representative pressed his voting button. Electrical equipment could also be used for requests for inclusion on the list of speakers when that list is about to be closed.

<sup>48/</sup> See Official Records of the General Assembly, Fourth Session, Supplement No. 12, document A/937, p. 22.

lower than that made in 1949, since the main expense would be for the purchase of equipment, and the cost of installation would be relatively small. This is so because the General Assembly Hall already has all the necessary electrical conduits and the conference rooms have most of them, and hence no important structural changes would be necessary.

## CHAPTER II

### RULES GOVERNING THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE RESULTS OF VOTES AND THEIR APPLICATION

71. The responsibility for announcing the results of votes in inter-governmental organizations and in national parliaments is usually entrusted to the presiding officer after the results have been handed to him by secretaries or by tellers.<sup>49/</sup>
72. Rule 35 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly states that "... the President shall ... announce decisions". A similar formula is used in other inter-governmental organizations<sup>50/</sup> and in most parliaments.<sup>51/</sup>
73. Although the rules of procedure indicate who shall declare the results of a vote, they are usually silent as to the form in which the announcement should be made; this is left to practice, and the difference in practices is very slight among parliamentary bodies.

---

<sup>49/</sup> However, in Chile the result of the vote is announced by the secretary and the President declares the motion adopted or rejected (article 157 of the rules of procedure of the Chamber of Deputies; articles 160 and 162 of the Senate).

<sup>50/</sup> Conference of FAO (rule IX); Assembly of ICAO (rule 29); UNESCO: Executive Board (rule 14), General Conference (rule 39); International Labour Conference (article, para. 2); WHO: Assembly (rule 25), Executive Board (rule 37); Council of the Organization of American States (article 23); Council of Europe Assembly (rule 34).

<sup>51/</sup> Brazil (rule 19 of the Chamber of Deputies); China (rule 52 of the Legislative Yuan); Greece (articles 71 and 74 of the Chamber of Deputies); Iran (articles 152 and 156 of the Majlis); Japan (article 155 of the House of Representatives); United States (rule I, 5 of the rules of the House of Representatives: "The Speaker shall rise and state the decision"); Yugoslavia (article 48 of the Federal People's Assembly).

74. In the General Assembly, the President usually announces that "the result of the voting is as follows: (so many) votes in favour, (so many) votes against, (so many) abstentions; the resolution is therefore adopted (or rejected as the case may be)". The same practice is followed by the Chairmen of Committees.

75. In case of elections or when a special majority is required, the President indicates the number of members present and voting and states the number of votes necessary to obtain the required majority.

76. In assemblies where voting by voice is used, the Speaker states whether in his opinion the "Ayes" or the "Noes" have it; he says, for example, "I think the 'Ayes' have it."<sup>52/</sup>

77. In some assemblies, however, the rules of procedure contain a specific provision for the announcement of the results of the vote. For example, in France, article 85, paragraph 2, of the National Assembly provides that "The result of votes in the Assembly is announced as follows: 'The National Assembly has adopted' or 'The National Assembly has not adopted'". Article 77, paragraph 2, of the Council of the Republic is similar.<sup>53/</sup>

---

<sup>52/</sup> This is the procedure applied in the House of Representatives (rule 165) and Senate (rule 132) of Australia, in the House of Commons of Canada, in the New Zealand Parliament (rule 134), the House of Assembly of the Union of South Africa (rule 44), the Senate of the Union of South Africa (rule 165), the House of Commons of the United Kingdom (by practice), in the Lok Sabha of India (rule 385), in the Senate (rule 43) and in the House of Representatives of Ireland (rule 56), and in the Parliament of Pakistan; in the last named, if the statement of the person presiding goes unchallenged, he then says twice, "The Ayes (or the Noes) have it". In the House of Representatives of the United States, in practice, the Speaker says: "In the opinion of the Chair, the Ayes have it, and the bill is passed", or the negative as the case may be. In the Philippines, when voting is by acclamation, the result is announced as follows: "The Ayes (Nays) have it" or "the resolution is adopted [disapproved]." Rule 165 of the Standing Orders of the Senate of Australia uses the words "Mr. President or the Chairman, as the case may be, shall declare to the best of his judgment, whether the 'Contents' or the 'Not-Contents' have it". Rule 43 of the Senate and rule 56 of the House of Representatives of Ireland state that "He [the Chairman] shall judge from the answers to his question and declare the result, in his opinion, of the putting of the question."

<sup>53/</sup> The same formula is used in Belgium (House of Representatives, article 62); Haiti (House of Representatives, article 86, Senate, article 71); Italy (House of Representatives, article 106); Luxembourg (House of Representatives, article 46); and Turkey (Parliament, article 145).

### CHAPTER III

#### THE PROBLEM OF CORRECTIONS OF VOTES

##### Section 1. Corrections of clerical errors

78. Clerical errors, that is, errors in counting or recording votes, are most likely to be detected in a vote by division, a vote by roll-call or a vote by open ballot; since the votes are tallied and appear in the records, representatives may verify that their votes have been accurately recorded.

79. The rules of procedure of the General Assembly and its Committees do not deal with the question of clerical errors. In practice, if a representative discovers a clerical error he may, on a point of order, call the attention of the President to it; if the error is discovered by the Secretariat, the practice is to inform the President who will in turn bring it to the attention of the Assembly. In both cases the President may order the error to be corrected.

80. This procedure does not depart from that of other assemblies, as it appears from the documentation received that clerical errors may usually be corrected before or after the results of the vote have been announced.<sup>54/</sup>

81. For example, in the Legislative Yuan of China a rule provides that the minutes of each meeting shall be read at the following meeting by the Secretary-General. Any mistakes or omissions discovered in the minutes may be corrected by

---

<sup>54/</sup> However, the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe once decided that a result could not be changed after it had been proclaimed from the chair. According to the information received by the Secretary-General, this ruling was given by the Assembly itself on 11 December 1951 (twenty-ninth sitting of the third ordinary session) after a procedural debate in the following circumstances: A recommendation had been declared adopted by a two-thirds majority (49 votes against 24), but subsequently the secretariat noted that the actual results of the ballot were 48 "Ayes" and 25 "Noes", so that the two-thirds majority had not in fact been obtained. The Assembly adopted the following motion: "The Assembly considers that it is contrary to the tradition and practice of all the parliaments to upset a decision announced as the result of a vote". On the rare occasions when a vote has to be corrected - usually as the result of a mistake in counting - the correction is indicated in a footnote to the table published in the minutes of proceedings, but the result of the vote is not changed. Another case is reported by the International Labour Conference. In 1951, after the closure of the 34th session of the Conference, a delegate informed the International Labour Office that in a roll-call his vote had been incorrectly recorded. His statement was added to the definitive summary record but the list was not corrected and the result of the vote as proclaimed by the President remained unchanged (34th session, p. 467).

the presiding officer with the concurrence of the members present at the meeting. As the minutes indicate the voting method used in respect of a proposal or resolution as well as the number of affirmative and negative votes cast, any mistakes in the records on such particulars discovered at a subsequent meeting may be corrected; in practice, the consideration of an agenda item is regarded as concluded only after the minutes of the proposal or resolution adopted under the item have been read and approved at a subsequent meeting.

82. In parliaments where the vote by division is used, in the event of confusion or error concerning the numbers reported by the tellers, a new division takes place unless the mistake can be adjusted by consultation.<sup>55/</sup> If a complaint is made that a division has been inaccurately reported, the presiding officer causes the journals, if incorrect, to be corrected<sup>56/</sup> or suggests that the necessary correction is made, and, if agreed to by the House, a footnote to that effect is inserted on the page of the "Votes and Proceedings" in which the division list is printed.<sup>57/</sup>

83. In the United States Senate, if a clerical error is detected before the day's proceedings are over, the practice of the Senate is to correct it, even when the correction changes the result of the vote. If an error is not detected until after the adjournment of the Senate on the day in question, the procedure, at the next meeting of the Senate, is to correct or amend the Journal of the previous day's proceedings so as to reflect the true situation.

---

<sup>55/</sup> House of Representatives (rule 205) and Senate (rule 182) of Australia; House of Assembly (rule 134) and Senate (rule 167 (i)) of the Union of South Africa; House of Commons of the United Kingdom (by practice). In the last-named, a division has also been declared null and void when, a tie having taken place, the tellers came to the table the following day and admitted that they had made a mistake in the count.

<sup>56/</sup> House of Representatives (rule 206) and Senate (rule 183) of Australia.

<sup>57/</sup> House of Assembly (rule 135) and Senate (rule 167) of the Union of South Africa. The practice is similar in Canada and in New Zealand. When the decision of the House is affected as a result of such correction, the presiding officer again announces the numbers and states the decision consequent thereupon. If the number of names printed differs from the total number reported as taking part in the division, the number reported is authoritative.



84. In Turkey, the solution of the problem is left open for each case;<sup>58/</sup> in some other countries a second ballot is taken<sup>59/</sup> or a recount is ordered.<sup>60/</sup>

Section 2. Request by members for correction of their votes before  
the results have been proclaimed

85. In the General Assembly and its Committees no rule on the matter exists but the practice is that, until the result of the voting is announced by the presiding officer, corrections of votes are normally accepted and the result is modified accordingly. It appears from the information received that this practice does not differ from that followed by many assemblies.<sup>61/</sup>

86. In case of a vote by division, if a member inadvertently goes to the wrong lobby he presents himself to the tellers and asks not to be counted by them; his

---

<sup>58/</sup> Article 201 of the rules of procedure of the Turkish Parliament provides that the President shall convene the General Committee for the purpose of determining the procedure to be followed in any case in which, after the assembly or the meeting, a serious error is found to have occurred.

<sup>59/</sup> In Chile, article 156 of the rules of procedure of the Chamber of Deputies provides that a second ballot, whether public or secret, shall be taken in the event of any defect, excess number of votes, defect or irregularity is such that a rectification would not affect the result, the ballot shall be declared valid.

<sup>60/</sup> In Thailand, article 83 of the rules of procedure of the Assembly of the People's Representatives provides that in any counting of the votes, if the Council of Ministers or a member who is seconded by at least fifteen other members believes that there has been a faulty count, the Council or the member has the right to request a recount without having to submit this request in writing in advance. If the Assembly so decides, there is a recount of votes.

<sup>61/</sup> Inter alia, by the Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Council of the Organization of American States, the International Labour Conference, the House of Representatives and Senate of Cuba, the Folketing of Denmark, the Chamber of Deputies of Iraq, and the House of Representatives and Senate of the United States.

vote as then declared by him in the House is taken by the tellers and recorded accordingly.<sup>62/</sup>

87. The announcement of the results does not always constitute the deadline for accepting corrections of vote; sometimes corrections must be submitted at an earlier stage of the proceedings. For example, in France the practice is that until the President has declared the voting closed, the deputies may change their votes, but may not do so after his declaration; in case of pointage<sup>63/</sup> after the President has announced that a pointage will take place no corrections can be submitted.<sup>64/</sup>

88. In the Chamber of Deputies of Brazil, when voting by roll-call, no correction is admitted unless it is made as soon as the secretaries have repeated the reply of the deputy concerned (Chamber of Deputies, rule 141, paragraph 2), and in the Senate of Australia, when voting by division, at any time prior to the appointment of tellers, but not thereafter, senators may change from one side to the other<sup>65/</sup> and a senator is not entitled to demand the inclusion of his name because he was absent from the Chamber and did not hear the division bells.

89. On the other hand, some assemblies do not accept corrections of vote even before the results have been proclaimed.

---

<sup>62/</sup> House of Lords, Public Business (rule 48). The same practice is followed by the Parliament of Burma. In India, rule 385 (4) (g) of the rules of procedure of the Lok Sabha provides that if a member finds that he has voted by mistake in the wrong lobby, he may be allowed to correct his mistake provided that he brings it to the notice of the Speaker before the result of the division is announced; the same applies in Pakistan, if a member votes under a misapprehension.

<sup>63/</sup> See paragraph 53 above.

<sup>64/</sup> National Assembly (article 82 (5)), Council of the Republic (article 74). However, corrections are allowed under certain conditions after the results have been proclaimed (see next section).

<sup>65/</sup> In one instance, the President ruled under standing order 177 that the vote of a senator who had crossed to the side occupied by the "Noes" after the tellers had been appointed should be counted with the "Ayes". A request for correction of a vote was once made where the mover of a motion was found, on division, to be on the side occupied by the "Noes". The President ruled, under standing order 170, that as the senator had given his voice with the "Noes" his vote should be so recorded. The senator in question had been refused leave to withdraw his motion. The rule and practice are similar in the House of Representatives of Australia.

90. For example, in the British House of Commons<sup>66/</sup> if a member votes in the wrong lobby it is the rule that he shall be held to the vote which he has given; however, in a Standing Committee of the House, members who have voted inadvertently have been allowed to alter their votes before the declaration of the votes but have been refused permission to do so after the declaration. In the House of Representatives of Japan no member may ask for any alternation in his vote once it has been cast.

91. In the First Chamber of the States General of the Netherlands, in the event of an erroneous vote, the member concerned may, after the vote has been taken, make a statement to the effect that he committed an error in voting and this statement will be included in the record of the meeting, but a correction of vote is not permitted.

92. In two assemblies, the Legislative Yuan of China and the Knesset of Israel, the rules are silent on the possibility of correcting a member's position (as reflected in the vote) before the announcement of the result of the vote. Nor is there any established practice governing this point since the question has never arisen.

Section 3. Request by members for correction of their votes after  
the results have been proclaimed

93. In the General Assembly and its Committees, in a limited number of cases, when the decision was not affected thereby, corrections have been accepted after the announcement of the result. Only once does it appear that a correction was permitted to affect the outcome of a vote as announced; in this case the correction was made immediately after the vote and was announced by the President.

94. In general the rules of procedure of assemblies are silent on the correction of votes by members after the results have been proclaimed; in practice, few assemblies permit such corrections. Moreover, where a correction of votes is permitted after the results have been proclaimed, such correction may not affect the results.

---

<sup>66/</sup> The practice is similar in the Parliament of New Zealand. In Canada, there are no rules setting forth a procedure whereby a member may change his vote once it has been cast. In fact, it is clearly set out in pages 48-49 of Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms (Third Edition), an authority often quoted in the Canadian House of Commons, that this cannot be done.

95. In the United States Senate, according to rule XII of the Standing Rules, after the result of the vote has been announced by the presiding officer, a senator may for sufficient reasons withdraw or change his vote only by unanimous consent.

96. In the Riksdag of Sweden, in practice, a member may declare that he has voted incorrectly in error after the decision has been announced. His statement is then recorded in the minutes but the decision cannot under any circumstances be affected by his declaration.

97. Of the countries which have sent information on the subject, France is the only one in which the right of correcting a vote after the results have been announced is provided in the rules of procedure. Article 85, paragraph 3, of the rules of the Chamber of Deputies states that the deputies may correct their votes in writing within eight days. Article 77, paragraph 3, of the rules of the Council of the Republic grants the same right to senators. However, these corrections cannot alter the results as proclaimed in the meeting,<sup>67/</sup> and when the vote has taken place in public and at the rostrum or in adjoining conference rooms, votes cannot be corrected.<sup>68/</sup>

#### CHAPTER IV

#### CONCLUSIONS

98. In the preceding chapters the Secretary-General has reviewed the voting practices of the General Assembly and, in accordance with sub-paragraph (a) of the operative paragraph of General Assembly resolution 901 (IX), has reported on the rules which in other inter-governmental organizations and in parliaments govern the announcement of the results of votes, on the conditions subject to which corrections are admitted and on the consequences of such corrections. The following observations relate to sub-paragraph (b) of that resolution, which

---

<sup>67/</sup> Chamber of Deputies (article 85, para. 4); Council of the Republic (article 77, para. 4).

<sup>68/</sup> Chamber of Deputies (article 85, para. 3); Council of the Republic (article 77, para. 3).

requested the Secretary-General to report "on possible provisions designed to prevent and correct any mistakes which might occur during the voting procedure in the General Assembly and its Committees".

99. The study of the voting procedures in the General Assembly and its Committees shows that very few mistakes have ever been found to have occurred, and that when they have been found they have been satisfactorily dealt with in most cases. Nevertheless, consideration might be given to the desirability of provisions designed to prevent and correct mistakes.

100. On the analogy of procedures followed in various other inter-governmental organizations and in parliaments, several minor changes in the present procedures of the General Assembly could be devised. The changes are mentioned here not as necessarily desirable for adoption but as an aid to discussion of the subject.

101. First, at the conclusion of any roll-call, the names of Members whose representatives have not answered could be called again. This practice would have the purpose of permitting votes to be cast by any representatives who may have been temporarily absent from their seats. The practice has in fact been followed in the past whenever it has been noticed that a representative has come into the room after the name of his country has been called in a roll-call vote.

102. Second, although with only a few exceptions Presidents and Chairmen have followed the formula for the announcement of results of votes set out in paragraph 7<sup>4</sup> above, it could be specifically provided in the rules of procedure that the President (or Chairman) should announce the number of votes in favour, the number against, and the number of abstentions, and should state whether the proposal or amendment has been adopted or rejected.

103. Third, it could be provided that the results of the voting as announced by the President or Chairman would be final except where it was shown that a clerical error had occurred.

104. These changes of procedure would not by themselves completely eliminate the possibility of mistakes. For the purpose of preventing mistakes as far as possible, the General Assembly might wish to consider the installation of modern electrical voting equipment, such as has been described in section 7 of chapter I above (paragraphs 63 to 70). As has already been stated, it would appear from the information available that such equipment has given complete satisfaction in the

parliamentary bodies where it is used. Failures occur rarely if ever; the machine itself gives warning if it is out of order; and voting is quite rapid. Electrical equipment could provide the equivalents either of voting by roll-call or of voting by show of hands.

105. As electrical equipment would have to be specially designed and built to meet the needs of the General Assembly, the cost of the equipment and its installation is difficult to estimate. An approximate estimate made in 1949<sup>69/</sup> was that such equipment for the General Assembly Hall would cost \$55,200, and for each of four conference rooms \$54,000, making a total of \$271,200. The Secretary-General will later submit a more exact estimate as an addendum to the present report.

-----

---

<sup>69/</sup> See Official Records of the General Assembly, Fourth Session, Supplement No. 12, document A/937, p. 22.