



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 2nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. AL-ASHTAL (Democratic Yemen)

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The meeting was called to order at 4.35 p.m.

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

1. The CHAIRMAN said that the optimism generated by the concept of multilateral co-operation two decades earlier was gradually fading away. Little progress had been made in recent years with regard to the new international economic order and the North-South dialogue. It was in fact paradoxical that the increasing recognition of global interdependence was being accompanied by a retreat from multilateral co-operation for development. Yet, in the words of the Secretary-General, "the problems of interdependence will neither go away nor lend themselves to unilateral handling."

2. The renewed interest shown in the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations was thus encouraging. He hoped that the Committee would help the Organization work more efficiently by streamlining its own work, thereby generating savings of both words and dollars. However, unless the United Nations was taken seriously by all Member States so that decisions commanding a broad consensus could be implemented, it would remain an organization that was efficient but incapable of producing concrete results. States must muster the necessary political will to accept change that was in the international community's long-term interest and participate in serious negotiations that would ignite the spirit of internationalism and better enable the United Nations to work for mankind.

3. The positive tone of recent statements in the general debate being conducted in plenary meetings of the General Assembly augured well for the Organization, as did the gradual shifting away from the polarization that had characterized recent years. There were even indications that serious arms control negotiations between the Soviet Union and the United States of America might take place, and it was to be hoped that the forthcoming summit meeting between the leaders of those two countries would lead to a genuine relaxation of international tension conducive to international economic co-operation. Both the Organization as a whole and the Second Committee thrived in such an environment, and he invited all delegations to co-operate so that the Committee might successfully carry out its work.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

4. The CHAIRMAN said he had been informed that consultations regarding the nomination of candidates for the remaining offices of the Committee were still in progress. He therefore proposed that those elections should be postponed until the 3rd meeting.

5. It was so decided.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK (A/C.2/41/1; A/C.2/41/L.1 and Add.1)

6. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the letter dated 20 September 1986 (A/C.2/41/1) from the President of the General Assembly to the Chairman of the Second Committee concerning the allocation of items to the Committee. He also drew attention to the draft programme of work (A/C.2/41/L.1) and to the list of documents submitted under the various agenda items allocated to the Committee (A/C.2/41/L.1/Add.1). He noted that, in pursuance of the recommendation made by the General Assembly, the attention of the Chairman of the Main Committees had been drawn to "the desirability, when approving their respective programmes of work for the session, for sufficient flexibility to allow for an orderly shortening of the session if the Assembly should so decide (A/41/250/Add.1, para. 5)."

7. Bearing in mind the prevailing financial situation of the United Nations, the General Assembly had taken a number of specific measures at the outset of the current session with a view to rationalizing its work; in that connection, certain recommendations should be taken into account in considering the Committee's programme of work. The General Assembly had decided to waive, at the current session, the requirement of the presence of one quarter of the members to declare a meeting of a Main Committee open and permit the debate to proceed. Punctuality was of the utmost importance in ensuring the effective and orderly organization of the Committee's work, the efficient utilization of conference facilities and the achievement of savings for the United Nations. The Committee should also consider the possibility of beginning morning meetings at 10 a.m. instead of 10.30 a.m.

8. Concerning the setting of time-limits for statements, he suggested that, in the absence of any definite agreement on the matter, the Committee might set a limit of 15 minutes for statements to be delivered during the Committee's general debate. He hoped to hold informal consultations in order to elicit proposals regarding time-limits for statements relating to other items on the Committee's agenda. Any time-limits that might be set should also apply to statements made by members of the Secretariat. He also drew attention to paragraph (d) of General Assembly decision 38/429, by which the Assembly had decided to encourage meaningful and better-focused discussions, leading to action-oriented decisions, and that the general debate of the Committee should focus on specific major issues of international economic co-operation and development.

9. He referred the Committee to paragraph 14 of document A/41/250, which recalled the provisions of paragraph 28 of General Assembly decision 34/401, concerning the consideration of reports which did not require a decision by the General Assembly, and also recalled the provisions of General Assembly decision 38/429 relating to the number of draft proposals submitted under each item and the nature of such proposals. In that connection, the Committee ought to focus its attention on the reasons for the non-implementation of previous resolutions, rather than adopt new resolutions which merely repeated the earlier texts.

10. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 39 217, all requests for Secretariat reports to be submitted to the Second Committee should conform to the biennial programme of work, except where the urgency of the subject-matter required

(The Chairman)

otherwise. The practice of providing Committee members with an opportunity to exchange views with the executive heads of the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system at the end of the meetings in which those officials addressed the Committee would be continued, as would the practice of distributing the texts of the statements in question three days prior to their delivery.

11. Mr. SEVAN (Secretary of the Committee), introducing the draft programme of work prepared by the Secretariat (A/C.2/41/L.1), said he wished to dissipate the concerns of delegations with regard to the proposed curtailment of the Committee's session. It was in fact misleading to say simply that the number of meetings and the duration of the session had been reduced, as though the time required for the consideration of the items had been reduced. On the contrary, in the proposed programme of work, prepared on the basis of study of past sessions, although the number of meetings had been curtailed from 52 during the fortieth session to 30 at the current session, the total number of hours allocated for the consideration of items remained the same. What had in fact been proposed was simply the efficient utilization of conference facilities. He urged delegations to approve the draft programme of work without any major modifications.

12. With regard to documentation, there had been a considerable reduction in the number and total volume of documents for the Committee - from 60 at the fortieth session to 40 for the current session. There had been considerable improvement in the distribution of documents as well, with only eight documents remaining to be distributed, largely because their preparation had had to await the outcome of intergovernmental meetings which had just been concluded.

13. Mr. NORRIS (United States of America) expressed support for the Chairman's appeal for greater efficiency; his delegation intended to comply by limiting its statements to the substantive matters at hand.

14. Mr. LAZAREVIC (Yugoslavia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77, said the Group hoped that agenda item 143 might continue to be considered by the Committee as long as any delegations wished to speak on it. With regard to documentation, he emphasized that Committee members must be in possession of the necessary documents in all working languages. The limited availability of various language versions of some documents had constituted a problem over the years, the need for documents in French having been particularly acute.

15. Past experience had shown that informal consultations were not only extremely important but frequently time-consuming. He therefore urged the Chairman adopt a flexible approach to their scheduling in order that the Committee might have enough time to negotiate all issues, particularly the more controversial ones.

16. The CHAIRMAN assured the representative of Yugoslavia that the Committee might consider any agenda item so long as speakers on that item remained on the list.

17. Mr. ZVEZDIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) endorsed the suggestions made by the representative of Yugoslavia with regard to agenda item 143 and the scheduling of informal consultations. He also shared the views expressed by the representative of the United States of America.

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18. Mr. FIELD (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the States members of the European Community, welcomed the proposed programme of work. The experience of the Economic and Social Council at its second regular session of 1986 had demonstrated that a great deal could be accomplished within a relatively limited period of time. He urged the Committee to try to complete its work by 21 November so that the Fifth Committee might have sufficient time to give proper consideration to proposals submitted by the Second Committee. He also suggested that more than one agenda item should be scheduled for each meeting, so that the Committee might continue its deliberations without interruption. Finally, he hoped that the practice of holding an open debate, which had been initiated during the fortieth session, would be continued and expanded during the current session.

19. Mr. LABERGE (Canada) welcomed the guidelines for the Committee's work set out by the Chairman. His delegation intended to follow them as fully as possible. However, he was puzzled to note that the Committee was not going to consider questions relating to operational activities for development and the integration of women in development in the context of agenda item 12.

20. Mr. SEVAN (Secretary of the Committee), replying to the questions raised by the representative of Yugoslavia, said that it would in fact be possible for the Committee to approach the scheduling of informal consultations in a flexible manner. However, facilities for such consultations would be provided only within existing resources on an "as available" basis. With regard to the distribution of documents in the working languages of the General Assembly, he noted that the Assembly itself had drawn up guidelines calling for the simultaneous distribution of documents in all working languages. Consequently, no single language version of a document was issued before any other. The questions mentioned by the representative of Canada would be considered in the context of agenda item 8c.

21. Replying to a further question from the representative of the Yugoslavia, he explained that under its biennial programme of work the Committee would normally have considered sub-item on industrialization under item 79; however, with the conversion of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization into a specialized agency, the item had been dropped from the Committee's programme of work. The item entitled "Industrial Development Decade for Africa", would, in accordance with the biennial programme of work, be considered in connection with the report of the Economic and Social Council at the forty-second session.

22. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it the Committee wished to adopt the programme of work set out in document A/C.2/40/L.1, as orally revised by the Committee Secretary.

23. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5.25 p.m.