



Chairman: Mr. Narciso G. REYES (Philippines).

*Organization of the Committee's work
(continued) (A/C.2/263)*

1. The CHAIRMAN drew the Committee's attention to a letter from the President of the General Assembly concerning the agenda items which it had been decided to allocate to the Second Committee (A/C.2/263). In connexion with the consultations which had taken place among members of the Committee regarding the organization of its work, he had been informed that the Group of 77, at its meeting of 24 September, had decided to request the group of socialist countries and the group of Western countries to agree to a suspension of the work of the Second Committee for the duration of the Ministerial Meeting of the Group of 77, which was due to be held in Lima, Peru, from 25 October to 5 November. He understood that the Chairman of the Group of 77 had been in contact with the Chairmen of the other two groups on that point. Since the request of the Group of 77 arose from the practical consideration that many delegations of the Group would have difficulty in servicing meetings of the Second Committee while the Lima conference was being held, the Committee might well agree to suspend its work during that period. If the Committee agreed to such a suspension, it should be fully aware that in doing so it would be limiting the time available for consideration of the items referred to it. None the less, he was fairly confident that, despite the suspension, it would be possible for the Committee to complete its work if members showed their usual restraint and moderation and approached their task in their customary businesslike and efficient fashion. It should of course be understood that, if the Committee encountered difficulties in connexion with its programme of work, the question of the suspension could always be reconsidered.

2. Mr. DE RIVERO (Peru) confirmed the Chairman's remarks concerning the decision of the Group of 77 to request a suspension of the Committee's work for the period of the Lima conference. He recalled that there was a precedent for such a procedure: the Committee had suspended its work for the duration of the first Ministerial Meeting of the Group of 77, held in Algeria in October 1967. The Group had held consultations with the socialist countries and the Western countries and had thus far encountered no objection to their request.

3. If the Committee was agreeable to the suspension, it might begin its work by holding the general debate, which would last until approximately 6 October; it might then proceed to consider the report of the Executive Director of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research

(UNITAR) and the reports of the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), before turning to the report of the Economic and Social Council and the proposals contained therein. The Committee might then suspend its work and resume after the Lima conference.

4. Mr. HEMANS (United Kingdom) said he fully appreciated the difficulties which some delegations would experience in covering meetings of the Second Committee at the same time as the Lima conference was taking place. He also realized that a suspension of work would provide a good opportunity to hold the resumed fifty-first session of the Economic and Social Council and the resumed tenth session of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC). However, he wished to endorse the remark made by the Chairman to the effect that the decision not to meet during the period of the Lima conference would be subject to review in the light of the progress made in the Committee's work. The work of the General Assembly should take precedence over regional meetings and such meetings should be so arranged as to disrupt the Assembly's work as little as possible. In the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on United Nations documentation and on the organization of the proceedings of the General Assembly and its main bodies (see A/8319/Corr.1, para. 163), the Inspectors expressed the hope that the Assembly would decide that all subsidiary bodies would in the future so plan their work programme as to issue their reports before the start of an Assembly session. Although that paragraph referred to subsidiary bodies of the Assembly, its substance should apply even more to bodies outside the United Nations system.

5. Mr. ZAGORIN (United States of America) said that, although there had been certain exploratory conversations during the preceding week concerning a possible suspension of the Committee's work, he was not aware that any consultations had taken place since the Group of 77 decided to make their request. He was therefore somewhat surprised that the Committee was being called upon to take a decision on the matter at the current meeting. While he did not wish to pose any obstacle to delegations which wished to attend the Lima conference, he felt that to suspend the Committee's work for such a long period in order to facilitate the deliberations of a body outside the United Nations system might set an undesirable precedent. He would prefer that the Committee should decide simply not to meet during the period of the Lima conference rather than formally to suspend its work. As the representative of the United Kingdom had intimated, the time when the Committee would not be meeting should be put to the best possible use by arranging other meetings—for instance, the resumed fifty-first session of the Economic and Social Council, the resumed tenth session of CPC and perhaps also

the UNDP Pledging Conference. Such an arrangement would alleviate the workload for the period after the Lima conference.

6. Mr. OSMAN (Sudan) said that, as a member of the Group of 77, his delegation was sure that the Group would have no difficulty in accepting an arrangement such as that suggested by the United States representative, namely that the Committee would simply not hold meetings during the period of the Lima conference rather than formally suspend its work.

7. Mr. RUTTEN (Netherlands) asked whether the Group of 77 would be placed in any difficulty if the suggestion to hold the resumed fifty-first session of the Economic and Social Council during the period of the Lima conference was accepted. Normally, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) submitted a report to the Council's resumed session, and the report for the current year would be of extreme importance, particularly for the developing countries.

8. Mr. OSMAN (Sudan) said he did not think that countries belonging to the Group of 77 which were also members of the Economic and Social Council would have difficulty in servicing the two bodies; his delegation, which was a member of the Council, saw no problem in that regard.

9. Mr. MAKEEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation had no objection in principle either to the request that the Committee should not meet during the period of the Lima conference or to the suggestion that that period might be occupied by meetings of the resumed fifty-first session of the Economic and Social Council and the resumed tenth session of CPC. However, it would be desirable for the Secretariat to organize the meetings of the latter two bodies so as to ensure that they did not overlap and that meetings of the one were not interspersed with meetings of the other.

10. Mr. AHMED (Secretary of the Committee), speaking also in his capacity as Secretary of the Economic and Social Council, said that the Secretary would endeavour to arrange meetings of the Council and CPC as conveniently as possible to members and to make the best possible use of the available time. However, there were a number of other considerations to be borne in mind in scheduling those meetings. The Economic and Social Council was faced with a particularly heavy agenda. Moreover, the Secretariat would have to take account of the dates on which the reports to be considered by the Council would be available, for instance, those of the Trade and Development Board and of the United Nations/FAO Intergovernmental Committee of the World Food Programme. Again, the Council would have to take up in sufficient time that part of the report of CPC on its tenth session which related to decolonization to enable the Fourth Committee to consider the matter. Regarding CPC itself, at least one day would have to be allowed between discussion and preparation of the report.

11. Mr. DRISS (Tunisia) said he failed to see how an organ of the United Nations could suspend its work simply because a regional group was meeting elsewhere. Although the Committee might agree in principle not to hold

meetings during the period of the Lima conference, circumstances might arise in which the Committee needed to hold an emergency meeting and it should not surrender that option.

12. The CHAIRMAN referred the representative of Tunisia to his opening statement in which he had said that the Committee might decide in principle not to hold meetings during the period of the Lima conference, but would retain the right to review that decision if circumstances so required.

13. Mr. ODERO-JOWI (Kenya) said that the reason why the Group of 77 had requested the Committee not to meet during the time of the Lima conference had been to ensure that the delegations concerned would not be faced with the problem of servicing the conference and the Committee at the same time. The Group needed to be clear on that point.

14. Mr. JAIN (India) said that to retain the possibility of reviewing any decision not to meet during the Lima conference would frustrate the purpose of the request made by the Group of 77. Members of the Group needed to be sure that no sudden meeting of the Committee would be held in their absence. He was confident that the matter would be clarified when the Committee came to consider its programme of work. The programme could be arranged so as to ensure that certain items were completed before the Lima conference and that others were taken up thereafter; if that was done, there would be no question of fragmenting the Committee's work or establishing a precedent.

15. Mr. DRISS (Tunisia) observed that to accede to the request made by the Group of 77 might establish a dangerous precedent. There were similar groups in the United Nations which might request the Committee not to meet during a particular period, a possibility which would have disruptive consequences. The Committee might, when it came to consider its programme of work, adjourn consideration of certain items, but it could not *a priori* decide to defer its work.

16. Mr. JOSEPH (Australia) said that, since members of the Group of 77 would not be able to attend both meetings of the Committee and the Lima conference, it would in the long run facilitate the Committee's work to agree to its request.

17. Mr. JAIN (India) said that the objection raised by the representative of Tunisia might be met if the Committee made it clear that a decision not to meet during the period of the Lima conference, would not establish a precedent.

18. Mr. DRISS (Tunisia) said that he certainly could not accept the establishment of a precedent.

19. Mr. OSMAN (Sudan) suggested that the Committee, when it came to consider its programme of work, should simply decide not to schedule items for the period of the Lima conference without addressing itself specifically to the question of suspending its work or not holding meetings. The Committee would then merely be deciding to organize its work in a particular way and would not be setting a precedent.

20. Mr. BRADLEY (Argentina) endorsed the comments of the representative of Sudan. The problem which the Committee had been discussing was essentially one of form, and he believed that the simplest way of resolving the situation would be to approve a programme of work in which there would be no items for discussion during the period in which it was felt desirable not to hold meetings. Such a course of action would avoid any need to mention suspension or an agreement not to hold meetings.

21. Mr. DRISS (Tunisia) said he would welcome such an approach, since it would at least save appearances; the realities of the situation were quite another matter.

22. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee could in that case agree not to take any formal decision on the question of suspension or of not holding meetings. At its next meeting, it would have a draft programme of work before it; all the views expressed at the current meeting could be taken fully into account, and a suitable programme of work could then be adopted.

It was so decided.

23. The CHAIRMAN said that, pending consideration of its time-table for the session as a whole, the Committee might find it desirable to agree to commence its work with a general debate focused on the report of the Economic and Social Council (A/8403). That debate, which in accordance with tradition would open with a statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, should enable representatives to comment on the world economic situation.

24. Each representative could, of course, decide which particular subjects dealt with in the report of the Economic and Social Council he would refer to in his general statement. He hoped nevertheless that the general debate would provide an opportunity for delegations to highlight the matters to which they attached priority; in the event, it would not be necessary to reopen the general debate when specific proposals recommended by the Economic and Social Council or submitted by delegations were discussed.

25. He appealed to members to inscribe their names on the list of speakers for the general debate as early as possible. He proposed that the list should be closed at 6 p.m. on Thursday, 30 September.

26. Mr. DIALLO (Upper Volta) pointed out that the report of the Economic and Social Council had been distributed only a few hours earlier. Members of the Committee would no doubt require some time to acquaint themselves with its contents. He therefore wished to appeal to the Secretariat to take steps to see that reports were issued in good time, and hoped that the Chairman would not insist on closing the list of speakers at the time he had mentioned.

27. Mr. ZAGORIN (United States of America) said he had no objection to the suggestion for a general debate. However, an alternative approach would be for the Committee to deal first with those items of its agenda which could be completely disposed of, such as item 43 (United Nations Institute for Training and Research: report of the

Executive Director) and item 44 (Operational activities for development: reports of the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme). If those items were discussed before the general debate took place, delegations would have ample time to acquaint themselves with the contents of the Economic and Social Council's report.

28. The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the tradition in the Committee was to begin with a general debate. To meet the point made by the representative of Upper Volta, the Committee could take up at the end of its meeting on 29 September the question of the closure of the list of speakers for that debate.

29. Mr. RUTTEN (Netherlands) said that it would be best for the Committee to decide whether or not to hold a general debate, and if so, how long that debate should last, as well as on the suggestion of the representative of the United States, when the draft programme of work prepared by the Chairman was before it.

30. Mr. BRADLEY (Argentina) said that to open the Committee's session with a general debate was traditional. In any case, it would not be appropriate to deal first with individual agenda items, since they might well be covered in the general statements of some delegations. Moreover, it was also traditional that at the beginning of the general debate the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs introduced the report of the Economic and Social Council; his statement was always extremely important, in that it reviewed the events and developments of the past year.

31. Mr. VERCELES (Philippines) said that at the present meeting the Committee should at least decide whether or not it would have a general debate. Perhaps by 29 September some delegations would be in a position to make general statements on the report of the Economic and Social Council, and the statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs would set the tone of the debate for the whole session. To start with individual agenda items would be an undesirable departure from tradition.

32. Mr. MAKEEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) agreed with the representative of the Netherlands that the Committee could discuss the organization of its work more profitably when it had a suitable document before it. His delegation understood the problems of certain other delegations with regard to the report of the Economic and Social Council, and felt that Monday, 4 October, would be an appropriate date for the closing of the list of speakers for the general debate, which was, in his delegation's view, an essential part of the Committee's work.

33. Mr. RUGGIERO (Italy) endorsed the remarks of the representative of the Netherlands. His delegation believed that a general debate was necessary, but felt that the question of when it should take place could be left open for the time being.

34. Mr. GOBBA (Egypt) said that the general debate should come at the beginning of the Committee's work on grounds of tradition, and also because it would have a

favourable impact on the fruitful discussion of individual agenda items. His delegation agreed that the closing of the list of speakers for that debate could be deferred until the Committee had settled the question of its work programme. It could not support the United States suggestion that individual items should be taken up before the general debate.

35. Mr. JOSEPH (Australia) said that, although his delegation believed that the Committee should begin its work with the general debate, it did not find an appeal to tradition a convincing argument. The Committee should not be bound by past practice, but should take its decisions in the light of what was appropriate in any given circumstances.

36. Mr. ZAGORIN (United States of America) pointed out that the Committee had invoked tradition in connexion with the general debate but had departed from tradition earlier by agreeing not to hold meetings during the busiest period of the General Assembly. The Committee had a very heavy workload, and it would be reasonable to take up other items until such time as delegations were in a position to participate in the general debate on the report of the Economic and Social Council.

37. Mr. DO RIO-BRANCO (Brazil) said that he agreed with the reservations of Upper Volta and the USSR that the Committee had very little time to study the report of the Economic and Social Council and that it would be unwise to fix a closing date for the list of speakers. The Committee should hold a general debate and then proceed to consider other specific items on the agenda.

38. Mr. PRAGUE (France) felt that delegations must have an opportunity of expressing their views on general issues as well as specific items. A general debate was essential in view of the present world economic situation. With regard to the Netherlands proposal, the Committee could defer its decision on the amount of time to be allotted to the general debate until it had considered the note by the Chairman on the organization of the Committee's work.

39. Mr. OSMAN (Sudan) said that his delegation attached great importance to the general debate and felt that it should be the first item on the Committee's agenda.

40. Mr. OHIAMI (Togo) felt that the main point at issue was the closing date for the list of speakers. His delegation considered that the general debate should begin on 1 October and that the list of speakers should remain open for two weeks.

41. Mr. DRISS (Tunisia) proposed that the general debate should start on 4 October in order to give delegations which were not members of the Economic and Social Council time to study its report.

42. Mr. HOEUR LAY INN (Khmer Republic) agreed with the Tunisian representative that delegations would need a week in which to study the report.

43. Mr. ODERO-JOWI (Kenya) supported the Tunisian proposal to begin the general debate on 4 October. His delegation considered that the general debate should

continue for seven working days and that the list of speakers should be closed on 6 October.

44. Mr. JOSEPH (Australia) pointed out that at least 27 delegations were members of the Economic and Social Council and were well acquainted with the contents of the report of the Economic and Social Council. A number of those delegations would presumably be in a position to begin discussing the report.

45. The CHAIRMAN said that he wished to withdraw his proposal to set a final date for the closure of the list of speakers for the general debate. The statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs would be distributed as a press release. He hoped that the note on the organization of the Committee's work would be circulated to members by 29 September.

46. Mr. BRADLEY (Argentina) felt that the Tunisian proposal to open the general debate on 4 October was extremely constructive; otherwise, a situation might arise in which too many delegations would wish to speak during the last few days allotted to the general debate. In the meantime, one or two meetings could be devoted to hearing the statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs and to considering the Committee's programme of work before going on to the general debate.

47. Mr. VERCELES (Philippines) proposed that the Committee should hear the statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs on 29 September and proceed with the general debate on the following day.

48. Mr. DRISS (Tunisia) said that he wished to stress that the date for beginning the general debate was not the real point at issue. What was important was to have a serious discussion, and unless delegations had sufficient time to study the report of the Economic and Social Council, that would not be possible.

49. Mr. DO RIO-BRANCO (Brazil) felt that the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs should make his statement on 28 or 29 September, but that the general debate should be postponed until 4 October.

50. Mr. HEMANS (United Kingdom) suggested that the Committee should adopt the United States proposal and take up other items at its next meeting.

51. Mr. DRISS (Tunisia) proposed that, since the statements by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs and the representatives of UNITAR and UNDP would be closely interrelated, the Committee might hear them before it began the general debate.

52. Mr. GUELEV (Bulgaria) stressed that in the general debate delegations should examine the world economic situation and other urgent problems, and should not confine themselves to discussing the report of the Economic and Social Council. It would be advisable to allow 10 or 12 working days for the general debate.

53. Mr. JOSEPH (Australia) pointed out that it was not unusual for difficulties to arise at the end of a session when

the amount of work still to be done had to be adjusted to the amount of time available. His delegation would therefore be in favour of hearing the statements by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs and the representatives of UNITAR and UNDP at its forthcoming meetings.

54. Mr. DO RIO-BRANCO (Brazil) said that his delegation supported the view of the Bulgarian representative that the general debate should not be restricted to the report of the Economic and Social Council but should relate to the world economic and financial situation in general.

55. The CHAIRMAN felt that, if the Tunisian proposal was taken up, the Committee's work would be interrupted for two or possibly three days. Furthermore, less time would be available for other items on the agenda. He suggested that the Committee should hold its next meeting on 29 September to hear the statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs and to open the general debate.

56. Mr. ZAGORIN (United States of America) said that the eloquent arguments of the representatives of Argentina and Tunisia lent support to his original suggestion that, in order to allow time for more preparation for the general debate and in view of the fact that the Committee's agenda was heavy, agenda items 43 and 44 could be taken up before the general debate, if there were no speakers for the latter. The general debate could then begin in the first week of October.

57. Mr. BRADLEY (Argentina) said that at its meeting on Wednesday, 29 September the Committee should discuss the Chairman's note on the organization of work and, in the light of its discussion, should settle the date for the general debate. On Thursday, 30 September it could hear the introductory statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, and possibly an introductory statement on the report of UNITAR, but without going into any discussion of the latter report. The general debate should then be opened as soon thereafter as possible, followed by the remainder of the items on the Committee's agenda.

58. Mr. MAKEEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) pointed out that the general debate could begin even if some delegations were not sufficiently acquainted with the report of the Economic and Social Council, since it was also intended to cover such questions as the world economic situation, trade and financial relations. In any case, the 27 members of the Economic and Social Council must surely

be prepared for such a debate. His delegation therefore endorsed the Chairman's view that on 29 September the Committee could settle all questions relating to the organization of its work; it would then hear the introductory statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, and immediately thereafter would formally open its general debate. To undertake discussion of other agenda items at that stage would in any case prevent members of the Committee who were not fully prepared from acquainting themselves with the documentation for the general debate.

59. Mr. DRISS (Tunisia) said he had refrained from requesting the application of the six-week rule with regard to the report of the Economic and Social Council, although he was fully entitled to do so. It must not be forgotten that the report of the Economic and Social Council, which was the co-ordinating body for the economic and social, and also cultural, activities of the United Nations, was an extremely comprehensive document. Indeed, the Council had adopted a resolution requiring all economic and social questions to be submitted to it before discussion by the General Assembly. His delegation had no objection to a general debate, but did not believe that the report of the Economic and Social Council should be discussed before Monday, 4 October. Unless all delegations were fully prepared for the discussion of that report, the debate would be distinguished only for its mediocrity. There must be a change within the United Nations if there was to be progress in the world. Unless debates were to be serious, they might as well not be held, and if the discussion of the report of the Economic and Social Council began before delegations were fully prepared, he would request the application of the relevant rules of procedure.

60. The CHAIRMAN said the Committee appeared to agree that on Wednesday, 29 September it should hear the introductory statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, and then consider its programme of work on the basis of the document which the Chairman would prepare. In the light of that discussion, and depending on how many delegations were ready at that time for the serious and substantive consideration of the report of the Economic and Social Council, which the representative of Tunisia insisted was required, it could then decide the date on which the general debate should begin.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.