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Forty-sixth session
FIFTH COMMITTEE
Agenda item 113

PATTERN OF CONFERENCES

Draft resolution submitted by the Vice-Chairman of the
Fifth Committee following informal consultations

Pattern of conferences

The General Assembly,

Having considered the report of the Committee on Conferences, 1/

Recalling its relevant resolutions, including resolution 43/222 B of 21 December 1988, 44/196 A of 21 December 1989 and 45/238 A of 21 December 1990,

Taking note of the comments made by all Member States at the Fifth Committee during the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly,

Noting the role of the Committee on Conferences with regard to inter-sessional departures from the approved calendar of conferences,

Noting also that the objective in continuing the study and analysis of utilization rates is to enhance a more effective disposition of conference-servicing resources,

Recognizing that improvements in the utilization of conference-servicing resources have been recorded and that further improvements could be achieved, including in the precision of planning the use of conference-servicing resources,

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 32 and corrigendum and addendum (A/46/32 and Corr.1 and Add.1).

Recalling the report of the General Committee, as approved by the General Assembly, which requires that Main Committees review the number of special conferences already proposed and scheduled in their respective fields of activity prior to deciding upon the scheduling of new and additional conferences and that there should be an overall limit of five special conferences in a given year, 2/

Keeping in mind its resolutions 33/56 of 14 December 1978, 36/117 B of 10 December 1981 and 45/238 B of 21 December 1990, by which it requested the Secretary-General to take appropriate measures to ensure that pre-session documents for meetings were distributed not less than six weeks before the meetings, simultaneously in all official languages of the organs of the United Nations, and to circulate eight weeks before the opening of a session of an intergovernmental body, with the annotated agenda of the session, a report on the state of preparation at that time of all the documents in all languages required for the session,

Recalling the Secretary-General's proposal at the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly to undertake a fresh outside look of the Department of Conference Services during the biennium 1990-1991 as well as the relevant decisions of the General Assembly in this regard,

Noting with concern that the rule concerning the issuance of documents in all official languages six weeks before the meetings has not been observed in many organs of the United Nations,

1. Approves the draft calendar of conferences and meetings of the United Nations for 1992-1993 as submitted by the Committee on Conferences; 3/

2. Authorizes the Committee on Conferences to make adjustments in the calendar of conferences and meetings for 1992 that may become necessary as a result of action and decisions taken by the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session;

3. Calls upon the Committee on Conferences and the Secretariat to analyse alternative scheduling arrangements for the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council and the ramifications of possible adjustments to the dates as currently scheduled for 1993, bearing in mind the provisions of resolution 45/264 of 13 May 1991 which stipulate that the substantive session should take place between May and July;

4. Notes the guidelines adopted by the Committee on Conferences with regard to inter-sessional departures from the approved calendar of conferences and meetings;

2/ A/46/250, para. 23.

3/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 23 and corrigendum and addendum (A/46/32 and Corr.1 and Add.1), annex II.

5. Invites the Economic and Social Council to consider formalizing its procedures with regard to inter-sessional departures from the approved calendar of conferences and meetings, by granting authority to the Committee on Conferences to act on behalf of the Council when the Council is not in session and consulting the Committee on Conferences whenever the Council itself is seized of such requests;

6. Requests the Economic and Social Council to consider proposals on the biennialization of meetings or agenda items of its subsidiary bodies where appropriate, fully taking into account the ongoing restructuring and revitalization process envisaged by resolution 45/264 and the views expressed by the subsidiary bodies;

7. Recalls that no subsidiary organ of the General Assembly may meet at United Nations Headquarters during a regular session of the Assembly unless explicitly authorized by the Assembly, and requests subsidiary organs to re-evaluate their reporting cycles with a view to completing annual work programmes, where possible, prior to the start of regular sessions of the General Assembly;

8. Requests the Committee on Conferences to examine, in the light of the approved calendars of conferences and meetings, particularly that for 1992-1993, trends in meetings and documentation requirements as well as the related workload of the Secretariat on the basis of the relevant statistics and projections covering the period from 1984 to 1993 to be submitted by the Secretary-General, and to report its findings to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session;

9. Requests the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences and the Secretary-General to maintain their contacts with United Nations organs, bringing to their attention ways to ensure the most efficient and effective use of conference services allocated to those organs, including, inter alia, the convening of meetings in a timely manner, rationalizing, to the extent possible, their meeting requirements, as well as monitoring the timely issuance and availability of documentation;

10. Requests the Committee on Conferences to consider, within its mandate, measures to improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the use of conference-servicing resources;

11. Requests all subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly and of the Economic and Social Council to undertake informal consultations on a regular basis for the purpose of improving the utilization of their conference-servicing resources;

12. Requests the Chairmen of these bodies to report the results of these consultations to the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences, and requests the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive analysis of replies received to the Committee on Conferences;

13. Requests the Committee on Conferences, in consultation with the organs concerned, to examine the cases where the utilization factor is lower than the established benchmark figure for at least three sessions, with a view to reporting on problems and factors that have given rise to such a situation, and to make appropriate recommendations in order to achieve the optimum utilization of conference-servicing resources;

14. Invites the Trusteeship Council to review its meeting requirements;

15. Welcomes the decision of the Committee on Conferences to incorporate an availability index on pre-session documentation into the experimental methodology on utilization of conference-servicing resources, and requests the Committee on Conferences, in continuing its analysis of the experimental methodology, to consider additional elements proposed in the Fifth Committee, including a review of the benchmark figure up to 85 per cent and the separate presentation of time lost due to late starting and early ending of meetings;

16. Requests the Secretariat, in order to promote increased utilization of conference resources available, to schedule meetings consecutively within one three-hour meeting period as appropriate;

17. Invites the Committee on Conferences, in close consultation with the Secretariat, and taking into account views expressed in the Fifth Committee, to strengthen its efforts in the coordinated planning of conference-servicing resources, including an examination of the current situation, and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session;

18. Requests the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session and as appropriate to subsequent sessions, through the Committee on Conferences and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, a consolidated statement relating to the number and costs of scheduled special conferences bearing in mind the annual limit of five as set out in resolution 40/243 of 18 December 1985 and endorsed by the Assembly in its resolution 41/213 of 19 December 1986;

19. Requests the Committee on Conferences to continue to monitor the meetings provided to organs and programmes not funded from the regular budget and to consider the impact of their scheduling on the calendar of conferences;

20. Invites the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme and the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund to review their meeting and documentation requirements in the light of their significant financial implications and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session, through the Committee on Conferences;

21. Requests the Secretary-General, in the context of the systematic and progressive replacement and upgrading of the equipment in the conference rooms, to make proposals to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session, taking advantage of the experience gained by other organizations of the United Nations system, on the usefulness and feasibility of installing an appropriate

signalling system whenever any speech time-limit is established in accordance with rule 72 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, to enable systematically each speaker, as well as the Chairperson and participants, to monitor the time left before actually breaking the time-limit;

22. Notes that investments in new technologies are essential for the optimum use of all resources, and, in view of the heavy capital outlay and recurrent costs, requests the Secretary-General to continue to take appropriate measures to maximize the compatibility and cost-effectiveness of the new technologies to be introduced throughout the United Nations system;

23. Urges that the applications of new technologies should, to the extent possible, be introduced evenly throughout all United Nations conference centres;

24. Urges the Secretary-General to take necessary measures to ensure that pre-session documents are distributed not less than six weeks before the meetings, unless there is a specific decision to the contrary, simultaneously in all official languages of the organs of the United Nations, and to circulate eight weeks before the opening of a session of an intergovernmental body, with the annotated agenda of the session, a report on the exact state of preparation at that time of all the documents in all languages required for the session;

25. Requests the Secretary-General and the executive heads of United Nations programmes, funds and secretariats of organs to ensure that each official document carries on its front page and in an appropriate manner the dates concerning the following stages of the documentation process: issuing by the substantive Department; end of the translation into the specific language; printing; issuing;

26. Requests the Secretary-General, with the assistance of a task force composed of appropriate Secretariat units and with supplementary assistance of experts from outside the United Nations, as appropriate, to be coordinated by the Management Advisory Service and financed through existing resources of the Department, to review the organizational structure, technological innovations and working methods of the Department of Conference Services, taking into account previous studies, with a view to enhancing efficiency and effectiveness, and to report his recommendations to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session, through the Committee on Conferences and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions;

27. Takes note of the comprehensive programme of work and biennialization of work programme adopted by the Committee on Conferences, taking into account its responsibilities as established by the General Assembly;

28. Calls upon the Committee to continue to explore ways and means for a more effective implementation of its terms of reference and the relevant recommendations contained in the report of the Group of High-level

Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations, 4/ as approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 41/213;

29. Decides to consider at its forty-seventh session the desirability and possibility of biennializing this agenda item in the context of the ongoing efforts to improve the work of the Fifth Committee by, inter alia, biennializing items of its agenda.

4/ Ibid., Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 49 (A/41/49).