



Chairman: Mr. E. Olu SANU (Nigeria).

AGENDA ITEM 78

Pattern of conferences (*continued*) (A/8319 and Corr.1, A/8448 and Add.1, A/8488, A/8532 and Corr.1 and 2, A/C.5/XXVI/CRP.32, 33 and 36):

- (a) Report of the Secretary-General (*continued*) (A/8448 and Add.1);
- (b) Report of the Joint Inspection Unit (*continued*) (A/8319 and Corr.1, A/8488, A/8532 and Corr.1 and 2)

1. Mr. RADLEY (United Kingdom) said that, in its amendments (A/C.5/XXVI/CRP.33) to draft resolution A/C.5/XXVI/CRP.32, his delegation had endeavoured to take account of the reservations expressed by certain delegations at the previous meeting. It hoped that the first of those amendments was more balanced than the original proposal. Without wishing to challenge the competence of intergovernmental organs to take decisions with regard to the organization of their meetings, his delegation believed that the Secretary-General should be able to draw the attention of Member States to the financial implications of such meetings. As to the session of the Committee on Natural Resources in 1973, there still seemed to be some confusion concerning the intentions of the Economic and Social Council. For the time being, the Council apparently had not approved the holding of a meeting in 1973.

2. Mr. WOSCHNAGG (Austria) said that his delegation's amendment (A/C.5/XXVI/CRP.36) to the draft resolution proposed by the Chairman called for the addition at the end of operative paragraph 2 of the phrase "and to include in the study consideration of other locations;". He pointed out that a study was to be undertaken in 1972 of the optimum deployment of Secretariat services between United Nations Headquarters (New York), Geneva and other locations. He said that a similar study in respect of conferences would be advisable.

3. Mr. NOSEK (Under-Secretary-General for Conference Services) suggested that the reservations of the United Kingdom delegation should be noted in the second addendum to the Secretary-General's report on the pattern of conferences, which was to be issued.

4. Mr. MSELLE (United Republic of Tanzania) said that his delegation was prepared to vote in favour of the Austrian amendment but could not accept those of the United Kingdom. A reference to the problem of documentation in the preambular part of the draft resolution would prejudice the question. As to the second United Kingdom amendment, his delegation would prefer that the Secre-

tary-General should discharge his mandate under General Assembly resolution 2609 (XXIV) without being entrusted with other tasks which did not fall within its framework.

5. Mr. BROWN (Australia) said that, unlike the Tanzanian delegation, his delegation found that the United Kingdom amendments were perfectly acceptable and that they reflected the views of the majority in the Committee. As the growth in the volume of documentation was linked to the increase in the number of conferences, a reference to the problem of documentation would not be out of place. Consequently, the United Kingdom amendments should not give rise to controversy and should be adopted without difficulty.

6. Mr. NAITO (Japan) said that his delegation could accept draft resolution A/C.5/XXVI/CRP.32 and would have no difficulty in accepting the amendments proposed by the United Kingdom. The first of those amendments merely drew attention to the concern shared by all delegations; his delegation considered the new wording of the latter part of the second amendment to be better balanced and more acceptable. It could also accept the Austrian amendment.

7. Mr. FAROOQ (Pakistan) said that his delegation could accept the Austrian amendment although the new version of the United Kingdom amendments was more difficult to accept than the initial text. He did not think that the problem of conferences should be linked with that of documentation in the same draft resolution. The proposed new operative paragraph 6 constituted a criticism of the Secretary-General in that it implied that the current pattern of conferences was not organized on the most effective and efficient basis. It would be better to wait until the Secretary-General had reported on the question at the twenty-seventh session before requesting him to take the necessary action.

8. Mr. MAJOLI (Italy) said that the new wording of the United Kingdom amendments took account of his own delegation's comments at the previous meeting. He wondered whether he had correctly understood the statements by the Tanzanian and Pakistani representatives. It was a patent fact that all delegations complained of the growing number of conferences and the volume of documentation; they would be failing in their duty if they refused to state plainly something which was common knowledge. The first amendment proposed by the United Kingdom representative would enable delegations to express their concern.

9. Mr. VAN DER GOOT (Netherlands) thought that the Committee should concentrate on the essence of the problem, which it had not done so far. The pattern of conferences, documentation, the staff employed, the venue

of meetings and even the programme of work were all closely linked. In order to shed light on the problem of documentation, the Committee would also have to consider the question of programme budgeting.

10. The new text of the amendments submitted by the United Kingdom constituted a specific proposal which his delegation could accept even though those amendments were directed to only one aspect of the problem. The Austrian amendment was also acceptable.

11. Mr. SILVEIRA DA MOTA (Brazil) supported the Austrian amendment. He could not, however, accept those submitted by the United Kingdom. The first of them raised a question of logic. The Fifth Committee was considering the pattern of conferences and that question had come before it not because of the increase in the volume of documentation. The pattern of conferences involved a series of quite different considerations, including the question of premises, staff and the dates and venues of conferences and meetings. The first amendment implied that the United Kingdom representative regarded the increase in conferences and meetings as essentially harmful. The Fifth Committee was considering the problem of documentation under the appropriate item of its agenda and the draft resolution in annex III to the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/8532 and Corr.1 and 2) on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on United Nations documentation (see A/8319 and Corr.1) proposed a series of specific and effective measures. As to the second amendment, he recalled that many attempts had been made to the same purpose in the past without yielding any practical results because of the numerous problems involved in the organization of conferences.

12. Mr. STEENBERGER (Denmark) said that meetings and documentation were two inseparable elements in the work of the Organization, which were really the collective tools of Member States. It was therefore impossible to impose arbitrary cuts in their regard. It must be recognized, however, that the tools had become too heavy to manage, particularly for the smaller countries, which did not have sufficient staff to give careful attention to all the documentation submitted to them. Thus, cuts were obviously called for to ensure that the Organization could function as effectively as possible. At the current session, the Fifth Committee had before it concrete proposals for a reduction of at least 15 per cent in the total volume of documentation, which should bring it closer to the desired objectives. The savings resulting from that reduction were in a way secondary and it was a moot point whether they would amount to \$1,250,000 or more. Nevertheless, a formal decision to reduce by \$1,250,000 the budget estimate expenditure on documentation would be an additional guarantee that the reduction would be effected. For all those reasons, his delegation would vote in favour of the draft resolution submitted by the Advisory Committee (A/8532 and Corr.1 and 2, annex III) and the Brazilian amendment (1470th meeting) to that draft. It considered that those measures were only a first step and hoped that the comments of the United States representative (*ibid.*) on the format and contents of future reports would not pass unheeded.

13. With regard to the United Kingdom amendments (A/C.5/XXVI/CRP.33) to draft resolution A/C.5/XXVI/CRP.32, his delegation found that the misgivings voiced by some delegations carried much weight but felt that no means to achieve a reduction in the volume of documentation should be left unused. It believed that efforts directed towards the tighter control of meetings and conferences and the expression of the Committee's awareness of the relationship between documentation and the number of meetings and conferences could be useful. It would therefore accept the United Kingdom amendments, even though it would have preferred the initial version of the first one. He endorsed the observations of the Netherlands representative as to the necessity for programme budgeting in respect of expenditure in the areas under consideration.

14. Mr. GARRIDO (Philippines) said that there was a relationship between documentation and meetings and conferences, and the adoption by the Committee of two draft resolutions on the subject would demonstrate the importance delegations attached to the question. Nevertheless, it was difficult for him to support the second United Kingdom amendment; in that connexion, his delegation endorsed the recommendation in paragraph 323 of the report of the Special Committee on the Rationalization of the Procedures and Organization of the General Assembly (A/8426) that the Secretary-General should play a greater role in drawing up the calendar of meetings, it being understood that in every case the final decision rested with the organ concerned.

15. Mr. JOHNSON (Togo) said that too much importance was being attached to matters of detail. His delegation could accept the Austrian amendment. Nevertheless, while agreeing that there was a relationship between the number of conferences and the volume of documentation, it was not convinced that it was absolute and that a reduction in the number of conferences would automatically result in a reduction of documentation. It would therefore abstain in the vote on the United Kingdom amendments which, in its opinion, should not be inserted in the draft resolution under consideration but should be taken up in connexion with the item on documentation.

16. Mr. BENDJENNA (Algeria) said that a reduction in the volume of documentation was imperative but that care must be taken to ensure that the quality of the documentation did not suffer thereby. The reduction should not be to the detriment of the developing countries, which had the greatest need of documentation in order to keep abreast of the work of the United Nations. In that connexion, his delegation endorsed the Advisory Committee's recommendation in paragraph 2 of the draft resolution submitted in its related report (A/8532 and Corr.1 and 2, annex III) that documentation originating in the Secretariat should be reduced by 15 per cent in 1972. It considered, however, that that reduction should, as the Advisory Committee emphasized in paragraph 25 of its report, be regarded as an over-all target and had reservations about a more drastic reduction in the volume of documentation.

17. So far as recurrent publications were concerned, his delegation wished to recall that during the consideration of item 76, in first reading of section 11 (Printing) of the budget estimates for the financial year 1972, it had

suggested (1440th meeting) that certain publications could be issued less frequently and that useless publications could be discontinued.

18. His delegation, too, considered that the Advisory Committee should share in the congratulations addressed to the Joint Inspection Unit and endorsed the amendment proposed by the representative of Brazil. Subject to those comments, his delegation would vote for the Advisory Committee's draft resolution.

19. Mr. ARBOLEDA (Colombia) agreed that the pattern of conferences and the volume of documentation were closely linked, but wished to draw attention to the tardiness with which most documents were sent to delegations. It was surprising that nothing on that subject had been said in the Fifth Committee. Conferences and meetings could be successful only if participants were able to study the documents thoroughly. His delegation would vote in favour of the Advisory Committee's draft resolution and the amendments proposed thereto.

20. Mr. HOLLIST (Nigeria) said that he failed to understand certain delegations' objections to the United Kingdom amendments. To say that there was a link between the number of conferences and the volume of documentation was merely to state a fact, not to make an assessment. The objections, particularly to the second amendment, of delegations which accepted the Austrian representative's amendment were not very logical. Indeed, the Austrian proposal to include in the study consideration of other locations was one of the possible measures to ensure that the pattern of conferences was organized on the most effective and efficient basis.

21. Mr. FAKIH (Kenya) said that the Committee on Natural Resources had been established recently as part of United Nations efforts to facilitate exploitation of the natural resources of developing countries. His delegation attached great importance to the Committee's work. At its 1971 session the Committee had established basic principles for the work of its next session, which was to be held in Kenya. At that session, the Committee would take up the question of an action programme to implement approved programmes. It might not, however, complete that task at the 1972 session and it might be necessary to hold another session in 1973. The question had been the subject of long discussions in the Economic and Social Council, which had decided that the Committee should meet "at least" every two years.<sup>1</sup> When the Committee had completed its groundwork, it could perhaps meet every two years; at the current stage, however, too long a period between sessions would render its work ineffective.

22. Mr. BERTRAN (Uruguay) disagreed with the representative of Nigeria. As the representative of Brazil had said, the implication would seem to be that there was something intrinsically wrong in holding conferences and meetings. His delegation was not in a position now to decide whether the meetings envisaged should be maintained or cancelled; it considered, therefore, that the question of the volume of documentation should be examined separately.

23. Mr. GONTHA (Indonesia) said that he endorsed the United Kingdom amendments; their wording might, however, be slightly modified in order to take account of some of the comments made. The preambular paragraph would read:

*"Aware that the growing number of conferences and meetings is one of the causes of the growth in the budget and in documentation"*.

24. The CHAIRMAN said that unless there was any objection, he would consider that the Austrian amendment (A/C.5/XXVI/CRP.36) had been adopted.

*It was so decided.*

25. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to vote separately on the first United Kingdom amendment (A/C.5/XXVI/CRP.33) as subamended by the Indonesian delegation, and then on the second.

*The first amendment, as subamended, was adopted by 45 votes to 16, with 8 abstentions.*

*The second amendment was adopted by 42 votes to 12, with 14 abstentions.*

26. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to vote on draft resolution A/C.5/XXVI/CRP.32, as amended.

*The draft resolution, as amended, was adopted by 64 votes to none, with 6 abstentions.*

#### AGENDA ITEMS 83 AND 26

**Publications and documentation of the United Nations (continued)** (A/8319 and Corr.1, A/8362, A/8437, A/8488, A/8532 and Corr.1 and 2, A/8540, A/C.5/XXVI/CRP.37 to 39):

- (a) Report of the Secretary-General (continued) (A/8437):
- (b) Reports of the Joint Inspection Unit (continued) (A/8319 and Corr.1, A/8362);
- (c) Reports of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (continued) (A/8532 and Corr.1 and 2)

**Rationalization of the procedures and organization of the General Assembly: report of the Special Committee on the Rationalization of the Procedures and Organization of the General Assembly [section IX] (continued)** (A/8426, A/8488, A/8532 and Corr.1 and 2, A/C.5/XXVI/CRP.37 to 39)

27. Mr. GARRIDO (Philippines expressed appreciation for the detailed study made by the Joint Inspection Unit (see A/8319 and Corr.1), and for the comments of the Secretary-General (see A/8488) and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/8532 and Corr.1 and 2) on the inspectors' recommendations. He had taken note of the reservations of the Secretary-General on some of the recommendations, particularly on the level of the reduction recommended, and shared his doubt that it would be possible to reduce the total volume of documentation by 50 per cent as compared with 1970, in view of the increase in the Organization's activities. The successful

<sup>1</sup> See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 1, resolution 1572A (L)*.

implementation of the Inspection Unit's recommendation, which seemed slightly over-optimistic, would depend on the future needs of the Organization; what was particularly important was that the Unit's renewed efforts had created willingness and determination to limit documentation. That was why his delegation endorsed the Advisory Committee's draft resolution (*ibid.*, annex III) which, in operative paragraphs 2 to 11, indicated specific measures for preventing the proliferation of publications and documentation. Nevertheless, it would have preferred that the Secretary-General should explain how the quota system would work in practice before the Committee took a decision on paragraph 2.

28. Mr. KALINOWSKI (Poland) expressed his thanks to the Joint Inspection Unit for its report, which contained valuable recommendations that constituted a basis for effective measures to limit documentation. He also thanked the Advisory Committee for the draft resolution which it had submitted, and said that he supported its provisions. He emphasized that documentation could not be reduced unless delegations supported the Secretariat's efforts by doing everything possible to avoid asking for additional documentation.

29. He drew attention to paragraphs 139 to 148 of the Unit's report (see A/8319 and Corr.1) on delays in issuing documents; table 4 showed that very few documents were issued before the opening of the General Assembly session. The situation became worse at every session. It had been particularly difficult in 1971 for the Fifth Committee, which had not been able to work normally at the beginning of the session because it did not have the necessary documents and was currently far behind with its work programme. That situation was unacceptable, and he asked why the Secretariat issued most of the documents at the end of the session, when the Committee no longer had time to study them, instead of at the beginning. As a result, the Committee was obliged to consider the least important items at the beginning of the session, and to leave till the end the major items, to which it could not devote enough time. He hoped that that was not a deliberate action on the part of the Secretariat. The qualitative aspect of the documentation was equally important: more concise documents would make possible savings in time and money.

30. Mr. RAMBISOON (Trinidad and Tobago) said that although the growing volume of documentation constituted a serious problem, documents were nevertheless the most important working tools of the Organization. He had noted with interest the progress made by the specialized agencies in limiting their documentation, but he pointed out that the United Nations and the specialized agencies were not in the same situation and could not be judged by the same criteria because, as the Secretary-General had noted in his comments (see A/8488, para. 11), United Nations activities were much more political. The time had undoubtedly come to limit documentation, but the question was where to begin.

31. The Secretary-General had stated in his comments that there were obstacles of a legislative nature in reducing documentation and that, for example, in the case of summary records, the limit had already been reached. He believed that the difficulty of imposing a quota system was

the main obstacle to reducing documentation. Possibly the adoption of a system of programme budgeting might pave the way for establishing a quota system. He pointed out that the documents were of very diverse character and origin, as indicated in paragraph 4 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/8532 and Corr.1 and 2). The responsibility for limiting documentation therefore lay partly with the Secretariat and partly with Member States. Thus a joint effort was necessary to deal with the situation.

32. It was surely the responsibility of Member States to decide to eliminate a publication, where it resulted from a decision by a legislative organ. But such a decision was difficult to take since a given document did not necessarily have the same value for all delegations. It was easier to reduce the size of documents and there the Secretariat could play a useful role by drafting shorter reports. In any case, since reductions in the volume of documentation might be offset by the production of new documents, the results might not be as considerable as the Inspection Unit or the Advisory Committee hoped. He therefore agreed with those delegations who wished to keep the 15 per cent reduction target recommended in operative paragraph 2 of the draft resolution of the Advisory Committee as a desirable objective, and not an absolute rule. He also took the same view of the decision in operative paragraph 11 to reduce by \$1,250,000 the provisions for documentation in the budget of the United Nations for the financial year 1972. He supported the draft resolution as a whole, and endorsed the proposal by the Brazilian representative (A/C.5/XXVI/CRP.37) that the fourth preambular paragraph should include a reference to the Advisory Committee.

33. Mr. GONTHA (Indonesia) congratulated the Joint Inspection Unit and the Advisory Committee on their excellent work, and supported Brazil's proposal that the Advisory Committee should be mentioned, together with the Unit, in the fourth preambular paragraph. The need to reduce documentation was a very important issue, and he wondered why the Fifth Committee had waited until the twenty-sixth session to deal with the question.

34. He proposed that the order of the preambular paragraphs of the draft resolution of the Advisory Committee should be changed by putting the third preambular paragraph at the end. It was more logical for the General Assembly to express its appreciation to the Joint Inspection Unit and the Advisory Committee after having examined the Unit's report and the comments of the Secretary-General and the Advisory Committee, and that it should then state that it was "convinced that the control and limitation of United Nations documentation is necessary for the effective and economical operation of the Organization". In view of that conviction, it could then welcome "the action taken by the Economic and Social Council, in section III of resolution 1623 (LI) of 30 July 1971, to improve the effectiveness and reduce the volume of its documentation". The example thus given by the Council was most important because, although its membership had doubled since its founding—which would normally entail a corresponding increase in the volume of documentation—it had decided that a reduction in the volume of documentation would in no way reduce its effectiveness.

35. It was not clear exactly what was meant by the reduction of 15 per cent recommended in operative paragraph 2 of the draft, or how it could be applied. If the Under-Secretary-General for Conference Services was correct in saying that some departments had higher documentation figures than others, on what basis would departmental quotas be established? He also wondered whether the general reduction of 15 per cent applied only to the quantity of publications, or also to the quality of the material published. He shared the misgivings of the representative of Argentina, and agreed with him that reduction of the volume of documentation should be carried out carefully so as not to harm development programmes. In paragraph 17 of its report the Joint Inspection Unit had said that the documents issued by the Centre for Economic and Social Information were financed from a special trust fund. Would the cost of those documents, which did not come out of the United Nations budget, also be subject to the 15 per cent reduction proposed in operative paragraph 2, or would they be subject to a more flexible treatment?

36. Mr. PLYUSHKO (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) expressed his appreciation to the Joint Inspection Unit for its most valuable work, and noted with satisfaction that the Advisory Committee had included in its draft resolution the recommendations made by the Unit in its report, including those for a 15 per cent reduction in documentation and for the establishment of a departmental quota system. He had hoped that the Advisory Committee would submit stronger recommendations, but the draft resolution under consideration was acceptable and he would vote for it. He added that he would not oppose the Brazilian proposal (A/C.5/XXVI/CRP.37).

37. Mr. FAROOQ (Pakistan) said that he recognized the need to reduce documentation, which had become too voluminous for delegations to absorb, but he thought it was necessary to proceed cautiously and guard against taking arbitrary measures.

38. He believed that the problem was due to the failure to stagger the issuance of documents sufficiently. Too many documents were issued at the same time, and delegations did not have time to study them. The documents concerning each item should be circulated to the members of the Committee six weeks before the item was considered. He accordingly supported the Yugoslav proposal (A/C.5/XXVI/CRP.39), although he regretted that it did not go further.

39. Both the length of each document and the number of copies required by various delegations must be taken into account. Delegations should follow the example set by the United States and voluntarily reduce the number of copies they requested. If delegations did not agree to do so, a quota could be imposed: a certain number of copies would be provided free of cost, and any additional copies would have to be paid for. As to the length of each document, the legislative body which requested the Secretariat to prepare a report should stipulate the number of pages in each case. If documents were ready in good time, delegations would have time to study them before the meeting, and the Committee's debates would be expedited. It would also save precious time if delegations which were interested

presented specific proposals or draft resolutions at the outset, instead of holding a general debate on every agenda item. Similarly, with respect to the general discussion on the budget estimates, delegations should expound their budgetary philosophies in their general policy statements at plenary meetings of the General Assembly, and confine themselves in the Fifth Committee to examining the various sections of the budget estimates. Further savings could be made by issuing draft resolutions as conference room papers with a limited distribution, and waiting until they were adopted before issuing them in final form for general distribution.

40. However, too much emphasis on reduction in the volume of documentation might not, in the final analysis, be in the best interests of Member States. Representatives to the General Assembly changed every year and members of permanent missions to the United Nations also changed; it was difficult for a newcomer to become familiar quickly with the items on the agenda unless he had adequate documentation.

41. The inclusion of meetings in the calendar of conferences resulted from decisions taken by the legislative bodies of the United Nations with due regard for the usefulness of such meetings and their financial implications. Consequently, criticism of the calendar of conferences was tantamount to criticism of the decisions of those bodies; he personally did not believe that the Fifth Committee had the authority to alter those decisions. It was perfectly clear that the holding of meetings and conferences required documentation and entailed expenditure, but that was not a reason for not holding them, because the benefits to be derived from the interplay of ideas at the international level far outweighed the expenditure involved; and the success of a meeting or conference depended to a great extent on the documentation.

42. In operative paragraph 2 of the draft resolution of the Advisory Committee, he proposed the insertion of the phrase "on an experimental basis"<sup>2</sup> after the words "other than meetings records" and inquired whether there was any relationship between the reduction of \$1,250,000 recommended in paragraph 11 and the over-all reduction of 15 per cent envisaged in paragraph 2. He would have preferred not to set a target figure and to review the question at the twenty-seventh session, taking into account the report the Secretary-General would submit and the experience acquired during 1972.

43. Mr. JEREMIĆ (Yugoslavia) pointed out that the problem arising from the delay in issuing documentation was particularly serious for the Fifth Committee because of the huge volume of documentation it had to examine at each session and because, to some extent, the work of other committees affected its own work programme. According to available data, the Fifth Committee had received, during the twenty-fifth session, 170 documents totalling 1,044 pages, most of which should have been issued as pre-session documents. In the circumstances, many of the in-session documents were of no practical use to the Committee. Apart from the difficulties created for Member States,

<sup>2</sup> The proposal was subsequently circulated as document A/C.5/XXVI/CRP.41.

those delays might have financial implications in that they might compel the Committee to extend its work. A more rational utilization of the capacity of the Secretariat might also make it possible not to have to adjourn meetings of the Fifth Committee when the Advisory Committee was meeting.

44. His delegation's proposal was based on the first two recommendations of the Special Committee on the Rationalization of the Procedures and Organization of the General Assembly contained in paragraph 304 of its report (A/8426). It recommended that timely distribution of documents in all working languages should be scrupulously observed, and that all the subsidiary organs of the General Assembly should be required to complete their work and submit their reports before the opening of each regular session of the Assembly. In that connexion, he drew attention to paragraphs 274 and 275 of the report and to paragraphs 201 and 202 of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (see A/8319 and Corr.1). He also drew attention to paragraph 4 of document A/C.5/1365<sup>3</sup> on the honorarium of the Chairman of the Advisory Committee. The first suggestion made in paragraph 274 of the Special Committee's report had been implemented and he hoped that the second would also be put into effect. He added that if the Advisory Committee did not consider itself competent to make detailed recommendations on the matter, the Fifth Committee was, in his view, sufficiently qualified to do so.

45. He had decided not to submit amendments to draft resolution A/C.5/XXVI/CRP.32<sup>4</sup> or the draft appearing in annex III to document A/8532 and Corr.1 and 2, but he requested that his suggestions should be included in the Fifth Committee's report.

46. Since he realized that the recommendation contained in paragraph 304 (d) of the Special Committee's report would not be viable, at least for the time being, he was prepared to accept a more flexible formula, namely, that the major part of the reports should be submitted before the opening of each regular session of the General Assembly. He therefore proposed the inclusion of the following recommendations in the Fifth Committee's report:

"In order to expedite the work of the Fifth Committee and avoid costly and unproductive night meetings, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, in accordance with the spirit of some of the recommendations of the Special Committee on the Rationalization of the Procedures and Organization of the General Assembly, should be requested to complete the major part of its work and submit its reports before the opening of each regular session of the General Assembly.

"The Secretary-General should be requested to prepare and distribute in due time documents relevant to the issues before the Fifth Committee so as to enable the Advisory Committee to discharge its functions in accordance with the above paragraph.

"The Advisory Committee should adjust its calendar of meetings during the year so as to be able to complete the major part of its work before the opening of the regular session of the General Assembly.

"The Fifth Committee should arrange its time-table in such a way as to facilitate the work of the Advisory Committee."<sup>5</sup>

47. He added that his proposals had been supported by the representatives of Afghanistan, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Sudan and Zambia. He associated his delegation with those which had supported the Brazilian proposal to congratulate the Advisory Committee on its efforts and pointed out that his proposals were motivated solely by the desire to facilitate the work of the Advisory Committee and of the Fifth Committee.

48. Mr. RHODES (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that he had the impression, from the remarks of some members of the Fifth Committee, that they thought that the Advisory Committee was somehow delaying the work of the Committee and that the situation should be corrected. He analysed the reasons for the delays and acknowledged that certain documents submitted by the Secretary-General reached the Advisory Committee quite late and that they could be submitted earlier. However, there were a large number of documents which could not be produced prior to the session because they depended, for example, on initiatives taken during the session itself. It should also be borne in mind that certain documents had to be considered by other committees before coming before the Fifth Committee. Therefore, there would inevitably be some pressure towards the end of the General Assembly session. Furthermore, certain reports, such as those of the Administrative Management Service and the Joint Inspection Unit, were extremely lengthy and it was impossible for the Secretary-General, the Advisory Committee or the Fifth Committee to go through them very quickly. The report of the Inspection Unit on documentation (see A/8319 and Corr.1), which was submitted in the summer of 1971, had remained with the Secretary-General until October; it had then taken the Advisory Committee another month to prepare its own report (A/8532 and Corr.1 and 2). The report of the Special Committee on the Rationalization of the Procedures and Organization of the General Assembly (A/8426) had not been completed until mid-September; the Advisory Committee had not received it until the beginning of November. If very voluminous reports of that kind were to receive the attention they merited, the Secretary-General and the Advisory Committee would have to have enough time to consider them.

49. It had been proposed that the Fifth Committee should accelerate its work at the beginning of the session. While it was true that the work could go faster if more documents were available, he wished to remind the Committee that the discussion on a number of items had been considerably delayed even though the necessary documents were available. The section of the budget estimates dealing with UNCTAD, for example, had not been taken up by the Fifth Committee until the previous week and the section dealing with UNIDO had not yet been discussed even though the

<sup>3</sup> See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 6B*.

<sup>4</sup> Conference room paper pertaining to agenda item 78.

<sup>5</sup> Subsequently circulated as document A/C.5/XXVI/CRP.39.

relevant documents had been ready since August. The Fifth Committee also often had to wait until the other committees had completed consideration of certain questions before it could take them up.

50. It had also been suggested that the Advisory Committee should meet more frequently. As Chairman of the Committee, he had no objection to that proposal. It was true that the honorarium of the Chairman of the Advisory Committee had been raised in order to give the Committee first call on his time. An increase in the number of meetings therefore presented no difficulty for the Chairman. He could not speak for the other members of the Committee, who also had responsibilities towards their delegations.

51. Lastly, it was important to realize that the members of the Fifth Committee had to be able to discuss the various agenda items in as much detail and at as great a length as they deemed necessary and the Advisory Committee could not meet concurrently with the Fifth Committee. Of course it should be possible for the Advisory Committee to meet more often, but an increase in the number of meetings would not necessarily resolve all problems.

52. The CHAIRMAN said that, as a former member of the Advisory Committee, he was in a good position to appreciate its difficulties. He assured the Chairman of the Advisory Committee that the members of the Fifth Committee were grateful to the Advisory Committee for its efforts to discharge a particularly difficult task and that their remarks should not be regarded as criticism.

53. Mr. JEREMIĆ (Yugoslavia) recalled that he had praised the remarkable work accomplished by the Advisory Committee. He thanked the Chairman of that Committee for his explanation, but he did not see why his delegation's proposal could not be adopted and embodied in the Fifth Committee's report, especially since it was quite willing to take into account any suggestions which might be made to it. He emphasized that although the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on documentation had been issued at the beginning of June 1971, the Secretary-General's comments had not been issued until the end of October and, in the end, delegations had had 48 hours between the time when all the relevant documents were in their hands and the time when the Fifth Committee had begun to consider the question, whereas the Secretariat had had several months to study the report. Such a situation was inadmissible.

54. Mr. HAMID (Sudan) said that the reports of the Joint Inspection Unit and the Special Committee on the Rationalization of the Procedures and Organization of the General Assembly had clearly revealed a range of shortcomings in the field of United Nations documentation as well as an obvious wastage both in the production and distribution of documents. His delegation shared the concern of other delegations about the situation and considered that a long-term solution should be sought on the basis of the recommendations of the Inspection Unit and the Special Committee. It believed that the question of documentation could not be separated from the question of the pattern of conferences and meetings and that it was also related to the question of the allocation of items on the Assembly's agenda.

55. His delegation appreciated the manner in which the Special Committee had approached all the questions entrusted to it, including the problem of documentation and its relevance to the procedures and organization of the General Assembly. The conclusions and recommendations of the Special Committee and the Joint Inspection Unit, as well as the comments of the Advisory Committee, paved the way for a constructive and integrated approach to the two important questions of the pattern of conferences and the increasing cost of United Nations documentation. With that in mind, his delegation had no difficulty in accepting the amendments proposed by the United Kingdom delegation (A/C.5/XXVI/CRP.33)<sup>6</sup> to the draft resolution on the pattern of conferences (A/C.5/XXVI/CRP.32).<sup>6</sup>

56. There had also been a number of interesting suggestions made during the debate, and he drew particular attention to the Canadian representative's point (1470th meeting) about the necessity of adopting modern techniques of handling documentation. Any future study of documentation should pay attention to the possibility of introducing such techniques and should analyse the experience of those countries and organs which had developed and applied them.

57. As to the Yugoslav proposal which would request the Advisory Committee to complete the major part of its work and submit its reports before the opening of each regular session of the General Assembly, his delegation was fully in accord and wished to join the sponsors of the proposal.

58. The Inspection Unit had recommended the introduction of a document quota system comparable to that used by FAO and UNESCO, with the intention of reducing the volume of documentation by 15 per cent. But due account must be taken of the differences between the two agencies and the United Nations, which latter had a number of political tasks to perform. It might therefore be difficult to devise a system of quotas suitable for the United Nations, and other measures might perhaps be preferable. In paragraph 18 of his comments (see A/8488) on the report of the Inspection Unit, the Secretary-General made the point that the adoption of programme planning, as proposed in the new presentation for the budget, would greatly simplify the establishment of quotas. Under a system of programme budgeting it would be possible to make a quantitative estimation of the documentation needed for different programmes of activity. His delegation endorsed the Secretary-General's intention to study the ways and means by which the sum of documentation costs attributable to particular programmes and activities could be separately identified in the new budget presentation.

59. Lastly, his delegation felt that, severe as the rules and methods for cutting down documentation might be, they would be welcomed and appreciated by Member States, by the Secretariat and by the delegates who had to study the mass of documentation.

60. Mr. BENDER (United States of America) said that his delegation had submitted an amendment (A/C.5/XXVI/CRP.38) to the draft resolution recommended by the Advisory Committee in annex III of its report (A/8532 and

<sup>6</sup> Conference room paper pertaining to agenda item 78.

Corr.1 and 2). The amendment would add, after operative paragraph 3, a new paragraph inviting the Economic and Social Council to request its subsidiary bodies to follow the principles listed in operative paragraph 3 when presenting their reports to the Council.

61. Mr. IZURIETA (Ecuador) said that action could and should be taken to improve the documentation situation or at least to keep it from getting worse. He agreed with the Yugoslav representative's view that the documentation could be cut by 50 per cent and that the meeting schedule of the Advisory Committee could be altered in such a way that members of the Fifth Committee would have sufficient time to study its reports.

62. As the Joint Inspection Unit had noted (see A/8319 and Corr.1, table 4), at the twenty-fifth session delegations had received only 20 per cent of the documentation before the opening of the General Assembly's deliberations. While certain delays were justifiable, there was no excuse for submitting so large a percentage of documentation only after the session had begun, indeed in some cases after discussion of the item to which the documents related had ended. The full documentation for any meeting should be made available to participants at a sufficiently early date. That was particularly important in the case of the United Nations since the positions of sovereign States had to be carefully weighed and representatives often had to consult their Governments. The problem was particularly acute for small delegations which did not have adequate numbers of advisory staff. The Secretariat must therefore try to issue documents in time. His delegation proposed the insertion in the operative part of the draft resolution recommended by the Advisory Committee of a paragraph reading:

*"Further requests the Secretary-General to take such measures as he deems appropriate to ensure that documents for consideration by the General Assembly are distributed, as far as possible, before the opening of the session."*<sup>7</sup>

That proposal went further than the one submitted by the Yugoslav delegation, as it covered not only Fifth Committee documentation but documents for the General Assembly as a whole. Its adoption would keep the situation from deteriorating further.

63. With that change his delegation was prepared to support the draft resolution recommended by the Advisory Committee, along with the amendment submitted by the Brazilian delegation.

64. Mr. MOLTOTAL (Ethiopia) said that his delegation would support the draft resolution recommended by the Advisory Committee as modified by the Brazilian delegation. While his delegation in principle supported the Yugoslav proposal, it would not wish to level any criticism at the Advisory Committee. It felt that the saving of \$1,250,000 referred to by the Advisory Committee represented a practical goal which the Organization should strive to attain.

65. Mr. BENNET (New Zealand) said that his delegation, which had been closely associated in the efforts to rationalize the General Assembly's schedule of conferences, felt that the most careful attention should be given to the many useful recommendations submitted by the Joint Inspection Unit (see A/8319 and Corr.1). That task of scrutiny had been performed in part by the Advisory Committee in its related report (A/8532 and Corr.1 and 2), and his delegation unreservedly supported the draft resolution recommended by it. The draft resolution did not go as far as the inspectors would have liked, but it was a very significant first step. His delegation also supported the Brazilian amendment and the new paragraph proposed by the United States delegation. It reserved its position on the amendment proposed by the Pakistan delegation and would need more time to study the suggestion of the Yugoslav delegation, particularly in view of the comments made by the Chairman of the Advisory Committee. Lastly, it felt that the amendment proposed by the delegation of Ecuador was a step in the right direction.

66. Mr. ARBOLEDA (Colombia) reiterated that the members of the Fifth Committee appreciated the extremely painstaking and arduous work done by the Advisory Committee; he did not see how the Chairman of that Committee could have gained the impression that some countries felt that the Committee was slowing down the Fifth Committee's work.

67. In view of the close connexion that existed between the number of conferences and the volume of documentation, his delegation felt that it would be very hard to cut the amount of documentation down. With reference to the fifth preambular paragraph of the draft resolution recommended by the Advisory Committee, which mentioned the control and limitation of documentation, his delegation was not sure how such control could be effected in practice. Indeed, it felt that the limitation of documentation should itself be made subject to certain limits.

68. His delegation had reservations concerning the over-all 15 per cent reduction referred to in operative paragraph 2 of the draft. It was afraid that a reduction of that order might adversely affect certain programmes, particularly development programmes, and it shared the concerns in the matter expressed by the Argentine delegation. As to the possibility of limiting the number of documents circulated to delegations, as suggested by the representative of Pakistan, his delegation felt that such a course of action was worth studying. It believed, however, that the late distribution of documents was the main problem. It would support the draft resolution recommended by the Advisory Committee together with the various amendments proposed to it and it expressed its appreciation to the Yugoslav delegation for the very interesting proposal it had submitted.

69. Mr. GUPTA (India) said that the draft resolution of the Advisory Committee posed certain problems. Paragraph 61 of its report stated that a 10 per cent reduction in the volume of documentation would allow expenditures to be cut by \$1,250,000, but operative paragraphs 2 and 11 of the draft resolution implied that such a saving would be accomplished through a 15 per cent reduction in documentation. In addition, the reduction would be distributed over

<sup>7</sup> Subsequently circulated as document A/C.5/XXVI/CRP.40.



several sections of the budget, some of which had already been approved in first reading. His delegation accordingly proposed<sup>8</sup> the deletion of operative paragraph 11, which technically speaking was inappropriate in the draft resolution. If the paragraph was maintained, his delegation could not vote in favour of the draft resolution.

70. Mr. VAN DER GOOT (Netherlands) expressed his deep admiration for the work of the Joint Inspection Unit and the Advisory Committee. He unreservedly supported the draft resolution of the Advisory Committee and the amendment proposed by the Brazilian delegation. Of the other amendments, some were acceptable while others required closer study. Generally speaking, he saw the problem in much the same way as the Yugoslav delegation: the problem lay not in how much documentation there was, but also in when it appeared and what it contained.

71. The Fifth Committee had not looked very closely at the use made of documentation. It was sometimes difficult to study documents before debate because the agenda did not show the order in which documents would be taken up, and in addition the agenda was subject to change. As the Chairman of the Advisory Committee had aptly pointed out, not only was the amount of documentation very

sizable but the work of delegates was becoming increasingly complex, creating a problem which must somehow be faced. The Yugoslav delegation had done well to point to that problem, and the clarification by the Chairman of the Advisory Committee had also been very useful.

72. It would be helpful if at the twenty-seventh session delegations were provided with an annotated agenda indicating the order in which documents would be taken up and the amount of time assigned to each of them.

73. Mr. MAUGER (Cameroon) supported the draft resolution recommended by the Advisory Committee and proposed that the schedule of work should be fixed on a weekly basis rather than day by day in order that delegations could make a thorough study of problems to be discussed.

74. The CHAIRMAN observed that each Friday the schedule of work for the following week was read out.

75. Mr. RHODES (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), replying to a question from the Australian representative, observed that the preparation of an Advisory Committee document on the Yugoslav proposal and its financial implications would delay the Fifth Committee's work.

<sup>8</sup> The proposal was subsequently circulated as document A/C.5/XXVI/CRP.42.

*The meeting rose at 2 p.m.*