

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 14th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. BUJ-FLORES (Mexico)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and  
Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

CONTENTS

EXPRESSION OF SYMPATHY IN CONNEXION WITH THE RECENT EARTHQUAKE IN ALGERIA

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

AGENDA ITEM 96: PATTERN OF CONFERENCES: REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON  
CONFERENCES (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 90: FINANCIAL REPORTS AND ACCOUNTS, AND REPORTS OF THE BOARD  
OF AUDITORS (continued)

(a) UNITED NATIONS (continued)

---

\* This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room A-3550, 866 United Nations Plaza (Alcoa Building), and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate fascicle for each Committee.

The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

EXPRESSION OF SYMPATHY IN CONNEXION WITH THE RECENT EARTHQUAKE IN ALGERIA

1. The CHAIRMAN, on behalf of the Committee, expressed sympathy in connexion with the recent earthquake in Algeria.
2. Mr. BOUZARBIA (Algeria) voiced his delegation's gratitude for the Chairman's condolences and for the assistance his country was already receiving in connexion with the earthquake.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

3. The CHAIRMAN notified the Committee, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 32/71, of its use of conference resources over the preceding week. He hoped that the Committee could maintain its excellent record.

AGENDA ITEM 96: PATTERN OF CONFERENCES: REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCES (continued) (A/35/32 and Add.1; A/C.5/35/12; A/C.5/35/L.5 and L.6)

4. Mr. GODFREY (New Zealand) said that the recommendations of the Committee on Conferences over the past three years had been practical and workmanlike and had led to more efficient conference organization and controls on documentation. It was appropriate that a standing committee of the General Assembly should monitor the efficiency with which the Organization conducted its meetings.
5. His delegation did not consider it was either realistic or sensible to try to restrict the special conferences held by the Organization simply by limiting their number. It therefore supported the pragmatic approach adopted by the Committee on Conferences and its recommendations 3, 4 and 5. It also endorsed recommendation 2, which was no less applicable to the documentation for special conferences than to documents for regular meetings. The Committee should continue to keep the matter of special conferences under review.
6. Additional guidance should be provided on the organization and convening of special conferences. A study of the work of one or two secretariats set up to organize special conferences, with the aim of facilitating the preparation of guidelines on the issues to be addressed whenever a special conference was proposed, would be useful; ways of improving the efficiency of special conference secretariats should also be considered. The study might: determine the extent to which shortcomings in the performance of a special conference secretariat stemmed from deficiencies in the enabling resolution or from insufficiently detailed guidelines by the preparatory body; discuss the interaction between the conference secretariat and the preparatory body concerned, and between the conference secretariat and other United Nations bodies or specialized agencies in a position to contribute to the conference; and consider the relationship between the timing of meetings of the

/...

(Mr. Godfrey, New Zealand)

preparatory organ and related meetings of expert or other groups, and the timing of report distribution. The study might also consider whether there were any guidelines or procedures on staffing and organizational matters that could usefully be standardized or codified so as to facilitate the establishment and efficient functioning of a conference secretariat; and, most important, it should decide in what circumstances a special conference secretariat should be established rather than using existing secretariat machinery, appropriately strengthened. The study should be carried out within existing resources by the Administrative Management Service, under terms of reference to be prepared in close consultation with the Department of Conference Services. It should draw on the Organization's experience of past special conferences and consider in detail the preparations for one of the special conferences to be held in 1981 - the United Nations Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy being an obvious choice. A report, with conclusions and recommendations, should be submitted through the Committee on Conferences and ACABQ to the General Assembly at its next session.

7. The discontinuance of summary records for certain bodies had, apparently, been accompanied by an increase in the number of documents issued on time. If the improvement was not evident to all, it might be because the documents that continued to appear late included those that delegations most wanted; and that in itself might reflect on the value of some of the reports which were distributed year after year at the request of delegations. Nevertheless, too many important documents were still not available when they should be, and the explanations offered for the delays were in many cases less than adequate. Next year, the Committee on Conferences should seek to ascertain why that was so and should determine to what extent the experimental suspension of summary records had achieved its objective.

8. The reluctance of some bodies to consider meeting less often or for shorter periods was a sad commentary on the low priority they attached to effectiveness and efficiency. In time there might be a change of attitude; meanwhile, the Committee on Conferences should continue its efforts to treat the symptoms, while considering ways of curing the disease.

9. Should the Committee on Conferences reach the stage where there was nothing more it could usefully do, it should be prepared to recommend its own dissolution, resisting the temptation to take on additional responsibilities simply in order to justify its existence. The cost of conference services and the need for economy would always be vital factors in its deliberations, but the Committee should not try to usurp the role of financial or budgetary organs; its task was to provide practical recommendations on improving conference organization in all its aspects.

10. Mr. MAL'KO (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) remarked that the Committee on Conferences had more or less abided by the mandate given to it in General Assembly resolution 34/50. It was clear that overprogramming had had beneficial results, and his delegation therefore supported the Committee's recommendation to the Secretary-General that he should continue applying maximum overprogramming. It also supported measures to control and limit the volume of documentation.

/...

(Mr. Mal'ko, Ukrainian SSR)

11. The draft guidelines on the preparation, organization and servicing of special conferences prepared by the Committee would, if adopted, enhance the efficiency of United Nations conference activities. Nevertheless, his delegation was concerned to note that the operative paragraph 1 of the draft resolution proposed by the Committee in paragraph 70 of its report (A/35/32) represented a retreat from the General Assembly's previous resolve to hold no more than one major special conference in any one year. It was, in addition, disappointed to learn that about one third of the time allotted to United Nations bodies was wasted owing to meetings' starting late, ending early and being cancelled.

12. While not wishing to detract from the Committee's achievements, he did not believe it could be said to have carried out the entire mandate given to it under resolution 32/72. Thus far the Committee had shunned the task of recommending to the General Assembly means of ensuring the optimum apportionment of conference resources, facilities and services. It was inexplicably reluctant to entertain the possibility of a system providing for an optimal, balanced allocation of resources among the various fields of United Nations activity, or to consider the future requirements of the Organization for conference services and facilities and make recommendations on improving the co-ordination of conferences within the United Nations system. Yet, in his delegation's view, those were the problems to which the Committee should devote priority; if its mandate was to be renewed, they must be on the agenda. It did seem, however, that certain delegations' doubts as to the utility of prolonging the Committee's mandate were not without foundation.

13. The Committee must stop concentrating its attention on matters that were the responsibility of the Secretariat. It should be instrumental in restraining the growth in the number of conferences, particularly in view of the saturated meetings schedule and the limited conference servicing facilities available. His delegation was still in favour of freezing conference resources at their current level and financing any new meetings and conferences out of resources made available through a review of priorities and the elimination of obsolete, marginal and ineffective programmes.

14. Mr. ALLAFI (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that the Committee on Conferences was too new a body for delegations to be able to pass definitive judgement on its performance. He hoped that it would be allowed to do its work effectively, with the co-operation of all concerned.

15. The harm done to the Organization by the documentation problem was indisputable. His delegation therefore supported the enforcement of the 32-page rule discussed in paragraph 35 of the Committee's report (A/35/32) and believed that such exceptions to the rule as might be necessary should be highly specific and kept to an absolute minimum. Any delays in the publication of documents should be considered entirely the responsibility of the Secretary-General, particularly since

/...

(Mr. Allafi, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

delegations had not received acceptable explanations for such delays from the bodies concerned. Some documents, moreover, were available on time only in certain languages, placing at a disadvantage those delegations which were forced to study topics in a language with which they were not fully conversant. Even if delegations were willing to co-operate for the sake of the Organization, the matter must be resolved. Consequently, his delegation endorsed recommendation 2 of the Committee on Conferences.

16. His delegation had always favoured sensible and justified economies and had therefore supported the Secretary-General's proposals to control and limit documentation, including the decision to suspend summary record coverage for some bodies. But although summary records had been suspended, delays in the issuance of other documentation persisted. His delegation had expected better, and believed that the entire matter should be studied in depth, particularly since the experimental period had shown that the suspension had been easier to cope with in some bodies than in others. In the light of requests by some committees for their summary records to be restored, coverage of at least some discussions in major bodies should be resumed until the matter had been fully investigated.

17. The system of overprogramming had proved successful in cutting down the wastage in conference resources resulting from cancellations of meetings. His delegation endorsed the Secretary-General's intention to continue overprogramming and, in that connexion, supported recommendation 1 of the Committee on Conferences, hoping that the Committee's following report would contain further information on both the advantages and the disadvantages of overprogramming as a system.

18. Finally, his delegation urged the adoption of the draft resolution recommended to the General Assembly in recommendation 5 of the Committee on Conferences.

19. Mr. MARTORELL (Peru) said that, while the Committee on Conferences had recommended the continued use of overprogramming, the prime objective of making better use of conference resources should be reinforced by providing statistics on the potential benefits, notably the savings on freelance translators and interpreters.

20. Delays in the issuance of documentation in the official languages of the United Nations were a major problem. Efforts should be made to resolve the matter once and for all and to end the practice of issuing documents on the very day they were to be considered. In many cases, documents available in other languages came out late in Spanish, a fact that smacked of discrimination.

21. His delegation fully supported recommendations 3, 4 and 5 of the Committee on Conferences. Despite the Committee's efforts, the number of meetings continued to grow year by year. The problem needed to be solved since it was immensely costly and at times caused imbalances in the budget. As a developing country, Peru always supported any conference that might serve to promote progress and economic well-being, but was also aware of the need to cut down on meetings that failed to

/...

(Mr. Martorell, Peru)

attain their objectives or ran on unduly without yielding positive results. It thus fully supported the ideas advanced in recommendation 5 of the Committee on Conferences, as well as the steps taken to control and limit documentation wherever that did not mean depriving United Nations bodies of essential services.

22. Mr. MAJOLI (Italy) said that the main consideration in the field of conference services was to save time, effort and money so as to increase the efficiency of the United Nations. The ever-expanding number of meetings and the increasing flow of documents created difficulties for all Member States, but especially for those which could not send large delegations to the meetings of United Nations bodies, strained the finances of the Organization and gave credence to the exaggerated but widely-held view that the United Nations was drowning in a flood of talk and paper.

23. Yet, it often happened that the very delegations which complained about the unbearable burden of meetings and unmanageable volume of documents called for more meetings, conferences, bodies and reports whenever a problem arose. The best, and perhaps only, way to counteract that trend was to accord adequate power to the Committee on Conferences, which had an appropriate geographical distribution, and to abide by its recommendations.

24. His delegation approved of the working procedures adopted by the Committee, as described in paragraph 6 of its report. It also welcomed the wholesome practice, described in paragraph 12, of approving additions to or changes in the conference programme on the understanding that any additional expenditure should be met from within the approved budgetary appropriations.

25. While his delegation endorsed recommendation 1, it felt that in some cases overprogramming might result in the maintenance of costly resources on a stand-by basis which might remain unutilized because an overcharged programme was likely to inhibit delegations from taking part in discussions. Accordingly, there was a need for moderation in the application of overprogramming.

26. His delegation also agreed with recommendation 2, provided that reports on the state of preparedness of documentation did not turn out to be new lengthy documents themselves.

27. Referring to the guidelines on special conferences set out in recommendation 3, he observed that there would always be initiatives to convene special conferences and, once such an initiative had been taken, it was difficult for it not to be approved. In his view, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council remained the most appropriate forums for dealing with any subject. Convening special conferences too often would reduce the impact of such conferences and give rise to repetitious follow-up debates at the regular sessions of the General Assembly. The work connected with the convening of a special conference

/...

(Mr. Majoli, Italy)

distracted the Secretariat from its regular tasks or, even worse, required additional personnel. His delegation fully agreed with the proposed guidelines for the control and limitation of documentation for special conferences and trusted that the Secretary-General would see to it that they were strictly enforced. It was his delegation's understanding that the guidelines relating to the conference phase (recommendation 3) were to be observed within the framework of the General Assembly's rules of procedure.

28. His delegation had no objection to the approval of the draft resolution recommended by the Committee on Conferences for adoption by the General Assembly. He concurred with the spirit of the remarks concerning the elimination of summary records made by the Under-Secretary-General for Conference Services and Special Assignments at the 11th meeting. Informal negotiations prior to the formal meetings should become the standard practice for all United Nations bodies. He shared the view that the duration of a body's session was not necessarily evidence of its importance.

29. Mr. JASABE (Sierra Leone) said that, given the critical financial situation of the Organization, it was imperative to adopt policies promoting the economic use of its limited resources. Accordingly, the Committee on Conferences should continue to approve requests for intersessional departures from the approved calendar of conferences only on the understanding that any additional expenditure involved would be met from within the approved budgetary appropriations. The Secretariat could continue to deal with those departures which did not have financial or administrative implications, as well as policy matters which did not entail significant administrative changes.

30. While appreciating the constraints on efforts to improve the utilization of conference resources, his delegation believed that the Secretary-General, acting in concert with the Committee on Conferences, should continue to seek better ways to ensure greater efficiency in the utilization of conference resources. A 20-per-cent rate of overprogramming should be adequate. More attention should be paid in that connexion to speeding up the recruitment and training of conference staff, since the continued hiring of freelance staff provided another opportunity to circumvent recruitment regulations.

31. The results of the reviews undertaken by the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences in consultation with the Chairmen of subsidiary bodies should be fully reflected in the draft calendar of conferences for 1982-1983.

32. While appreciating the difficulties involved, his delegation wondered how long it would take the Secretariat to comply with the provisions of resolution 34/50 relating to the control and limitation of documentation.

/...

(Mr. Jasabe, Sierra Leone)

33. It continued to support the decision taken by the General Assembly to eliminate summary records for certain subsidiary bodies, and, while appreciating the case made by some subsidiary bodies for the reinstatement of summary records for their meetings in view of the special nature of their functions, believed that the General Assembly and the Committee on Conferences should be sparing in granting exceptions. The United Nations should attribute equal importance to legal, political and economic matters. His delegation therefore would be reluctant to support the Secretary-General's recommendation in paragraph 9 (b) of document A/C.5/35/12.

34. The length of documents could be substantially reduced if they contained less background material and fewer details. With regard to the late issue of documents, he agreed that full explanations should be given in documents on the state of preparedness of documentation. In order to cut down on the number of copies issued, delegations should pick up documents at their missions wherever possible, instead of requesting additional copies from the documents distribution officers in the meeting rooms.

35. The question of streamlining the agenda of sessions was receiving full consideration in a number of United Nations bodies. It was essential for all organs and subsidiary bodies to address themselves to such matters as the identification of questions requiring decision at the following session, the possibility of refraining from discussing progress reports unless specifically requested to do so, the possibility of adopting a biennial system of reporting in respect of certain items, the possibility of reducing the number of documents by distinguishing between questions which had policy implications and those which could be left to the Secretariat, the increasing referral of work to ad hoc committees, and the strengthening of the role of committee officers with respect to the organization of work.

36. An important innovation adopted by UNDP, which the Committee on Conferences might wish to recommend to other bodies, was the full summary on the cover page of all documents indicating in which areas action was called for, the nature of such action and the financial implications.

37. On the whole, his delegation supported the recommendations of the Committee on Conferences in paragraph 70 of its report, and concurred with the position taken by that Committee with regard to arrangements for the tenth session of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea.

38. The failure of special conferences led to disenchantment and even increased volatility when the sense of unity of a large group was continuously disregarded. The problem was not that the terms of reference of special conferences had not been properly defined but rather that there had been an unwillingness to negotiate matters of common interest. His delegation accepted the guidelines for special conferences recommended by the Committee on Conferences and looked forward to the submission of standard rules of procedure by the Secretary-General at the thirty-sixth session.

39. The United Nations should avail itself of invitations from Governments to hold

/...



(Mr. Jasabe, Sierra Leone)

conferences away from Headquarters, especially in view of the difficulties which some delegations encountered in meeting the cost of accommodation in most established duty stations.

40. Mr. AMORIN (Uruguay) said that his delegation was prepared to endorse the recommendations of the Committee on Conferences, subject to such modifications as the Assembly might approve, especially with regard to the tenth session of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea.

41. His delegation noted with satisfaction the work done by the Committee on the question of the planned and actual duration of the sessions of subsidiary organs and the question of guidelines for the preparation and organization of special conferences.

42. It was indicated in the draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings for 1981 that the venue of the nineteenth session of ECLA had yet to be determined. However, ECLA had already accepted the invitation of his Government to hold the session in Montevideo, and he requested that the draft calendar of conferences should be revised to reflect that fact.

43. Mr. PAPENDORP (United States of America) said that the report of the Committee on Conferences was very clear and comprehensive and that his delegation could heartily support the recommendations set out in it. He was particularly pleased that the Committee had practised what it preached by producing a report that had been available to Member States well before the opening of the session.

44. His delegation was disappointed at the responses received by the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences to the communications he had addressed to those United Nations bodies that appeared to have a high incidence of late starting, early adjournment or cancellation. The main point cited in those responses was that delicate political circumstances required informal consultations. While recognizing the importance of such consultations and their contribution to the work of the United Nations, he believed that they should be scheduled in a manner which economized, rather than squandered, costly conference servicing resources.

45. The Secretariat had a finite capacity to process the increasing volume of documentation requested, sometimes in an almost haphazard manner, by some representatives in various intergovernmental bodies. Each page of documentation entailed a heavy cost in terms of staff time, use of equipment, and materials and supplies consumed.

46. He commended the secretaries of the Second Committee and the Economic and Social Council for the manner in which they had sought to comply with the resolutions of the Council and Assembly aimed at rationalizing documentation and ensuring that documents were circulated sufficiently in advance of the meetings of intergovernmental bodies to enable Member States adequately to prepare for those meetings.

/...

(Mr. Papendorp, United States)

47. It was evident that one of the major reasons for the late issue of documentation was the heavy volume of reports; stricter compliance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 33/56 relating to the length of documents would mitigate some of the problems. Another reason was the late submission by Governments of views requested by the Secretariat. Yet another reason sometimes cited for delays was the need to obtain clearances within the Secretariat. The appropriate exercise of administrative and executive responsibilities and authority should ensure that reports were drafted with sufficient lead time to permit adequate clearance within the Secretariat. Drafts of documents sent for review should be accorded high priority in substantive departments. The General Assembly should be provided with reasons, not excuses, for delays in the issue of documentation. United Nations bodies would then have an accurate idea of who, or what, was at fault when a document was late and, even more important, Secretariat officials could draw the proper conclusions from such information so that the same mistakes would not be repeated.

48. The proposed guidelines for special conferences would lead to the more effective and more economical functioning of the United Nations, and should enable preparatory bodies and the Secretariat units concerned to devote more time to substantive rather than procedural matters. The draft rules of procedure which the Secretary-General had been requested to submit to the next session would enable special conferences to deal with their substantive agenda items more quickly.

49. While the Committee on Conferences might not have operated perfectly since its establishment, it had helped to bring about improvements in the work of the United Nations. Things would undoubtedly have been much worse without the contribution of the Committee. The mandate laid down for the Committee by the General Assembly in resolution 32/72 continued to be valid.

50. With regard to arrangements for the tenth session of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea, his delegation was committed to the early and successful conclusion of the work of the Conference and had no preference between New York and Geneva as the venue for that session. There were, however, competing demands for available conferences services, and the possibility that the global negotiations might be held at Headquarters introduced a new factor. Accordingly, a decision on the matter should be taken in the light of the administrative and financial consequences of rescheduling meetings due to take place in New York. His delegation hoped that the Secretary-General would be able to submit a statement of administrative and financial implications to the Assembly at the time it considered the request in document A/35/500.

51. The experiment involving the elimination of summary records for certain subsidiary bodies had been successful, and his delegation supported the

/...

(Mr. Papendorp, United States)

Secretary-General's recommendation on that matter in paragraph 9 of his report (A/C.5/35/12). The resources released as a result of the discontinuance of summary records should be used to improve the timeliness of other documentation. His delegation was aware, however, that Secretariat units outside the Department of Conference Services and Member States bore considerable responsibility for the late issue of documentation. Accordingly, efforts were required on a broad front if the documentation problem was to be solved.

52. Mr. HILLEL (Israel), congratulating the Committee on Conferences on its concise, action-oriented report, noted that in many instances expensive resources allocated to subsidiary organs were not adequately utilized. Approximately one third of the time allotted was wasted, and the results of conferences were often far from tangible. His delegation therefore fully supported the efforts of the Committee on Conferences and of the Ad Hoc Committee on Subsidiary Organs to reduce the duration and frequency of meetings of subsidiary organs, and hoped that the results would be duly reflected in the next revised calendar of conferences.

53. It welcomed the recommendation that the Secretary-General should continue to apply overprogramming to the maximum extent feasible, and supported recommendations 3 and 5 referring to the preparation, organization and servicing of special conferences and preparatory meetings. It noted, however, that the improvement of technical facilities alone was insufficient; greater willingness was required on the part of all participants to take full advantage of existing facilities and to make productive use of the available time reserved for conferences. Efforts should be made to eliminate the practice of scheduling consultations which conflicted with formal meetings and interfered with the approved schedule. His delegation recognized the need for caucus consultations; however, as far as official meetings of the Organization - whether preparatory or not - were concerned, the principles of sovereign equality and universality should be strictly applied.

54. Exceptions to the elimination of summary records for subsidiary bodies were unjustified except in those instances where the exact legal wording was of the essence.

55. His delegation recognized the need for departures from the approved calendar of conferences and for a flexible framework to take account of developments in off-budget years, such as the forthcoming convening of the tenth session of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea and the launching of the global negotiations. In his delegation's opinion the Committee on Conferences was not sufficiently utilized as an effective tool in exercising control over the Organization's many conference activities. Governments represented on that Committee should become more deeply involved in the actual process of establishing the framework for conferences; the vast resources allocated were, after all, provided by Member States, and they should be directly involved in improving performance in that area. Certain conferences, like other activities, had over the years become increasingly marginal, ineffective and even obsolete; he hoped that a continuous, persistent effort by the Committee on Conferences would result in greater effectiveness. One way of improving performance might be to establish

/...

(Mr. Hillel, Israel)

a compact programme of conferences which would concentrate on essential meetings capable of producing results and would stay within the limits of available resources.

56. Mr. GUBCSI (Hungary) observed that the task of co-ordinating the various conferences to take due account of the five priorities of the Organization and to ensure the effectiveness of forums for international negotiations was particularly urgent in the present period of intensive international political activity. The report of the Committee on Conferences reflected the will to implement the relevant General Assembly resolutions concerning the pattern of conferences. His delegation fully supported the Committee's action in only approving departures from the approved calendar on the understanding that any additional expenditure could be met within the approved budgetary appropriations for the biennium 1980-1981. It was noted that action taken in the field of overprogramming had proved effective in reducing the negative impact of cancellations of scheduled meetings and improving the utilization of conference resources. However, he believed that the duration of sessions of subsidiary organs could be shortened by more careful preparation and fewer cancellations or early adjournments of meetings. In that connexion, he hoped that the Fifth Committee would heed its Chairman's appeal for punctuality. Sessions could also be used more effectively if documentation was issued on time.

57. While expressing satisfaction at the results achieved in the control and limitation of documentation, he emphasized that the six-week rule was often no more than a dream and rarely was there any offer of explanation for delays. He therefore endorsed recommendation 2 as the very least delegations should expect. He hoped that in the near future all documents would be issued on time.

58. On the subject of special conferences, he emphasized the importance of the priorities of the United Nations, the significance of co-ordination and preparation, and the need for full implementation of relevant General Assembly resolutions. The Committee on Conferences should have concentrated on the co-ordination of conferences and, if necessary, on the limitation of special conferences, rather than on rationalization, which was the task of the Secretariat. Its future work should focus on the Organization's five priority areas of activity with a view to controlling and halting the enormous increase in the number of meetings and conferences that did not fall within those areas. He hoped that the General Assembly would adopt the guidelines set out in recommendation 3.

59. Finally, he expressed support for the Secretary-General's recommendations in document A/C.5/35/12, and hoped that they would have been implemented by the next session.

60. Mr. MABVIKO (Malawi) said that the Committee on Conferences had done good work within its terms of reference, but his delegation was rather sceptical at the Committee's recommendation with respect to overprogramming. There was a danger that the 20 per cent overprogramming rate currently being used might lead to an increase of resources by a similar percentage if all scheduled meetings were held. Instead of that recommendation, his delegation would prefer to see an effective

/...

(Mr. Mabviko, Malawi)

and expanded Department of Conference Services take over full responsibility for arranging all scheduled conferences and ensuring that action was taken in good time to cancel meetings before resources could be wasted.

61. He requested the Secretariat to provide all members of the Committee with a list of all meetings scheduled for 1979 which had not been held, together with reasons why each had been cancelled, had started late or had ended early. He further requested an assurance that such information would be provided, as a matter of course, in the future. A status report should also be provided on the additional meetings or changes in the calendar approved by the Committee on Conferences in paragraph 12 of its report. He wondered whether the Secretary-General was still confident that the expenditure involved could be met from available resources for the biennium 1980-1981.

62. Mr. LÖSCHNER (Federal Republic of Germany), expressing appreciation for the work of the Committee on Conferences, said that the Secretary-General's intention to continue implementing overprogramming should be encouraged. However, the use of the expression "maximum overprogramming" in paragraph 70 of the Committee's report (A/35/32) might lead to misunderstanding and the distortion of the intended results. Overprogramming, like any programming or planning, could tie up resources.

63. Given the fact that about one third of the time allotted to United Nations bodies was wasted owing to late starts, early endings or cancellation of meetings, his delegation joined the appeal of the Chairman of the Fifth Committee for punctuality. It was interested in knowing the results of the consultations conducted between the Committee on Conferences and the subsidiary bodies mentioned in annex II of its report, and of any efforts to establish a formal link between the Committee on Conferences and the Ad Hoc Committee on Subsidiary Organs. The emphasis of the latter on greater efforts to schedule meetings on a biennial basis was a step in the right direction which, it was hoped, would result in an actual reduction in the number of meetings.

64. Efforts to control and limit documentation, including the 32-page rule and the principle of dispensing with summary records for subsidiary bodies, would have to be pursued. In addition, the implementation of recommendation 7 of the Committee on Conferences might contribute considerably to improving the work of the General Assembly itself.

65. Given the increasing number of special conferences, his delegation appreciated the efforts made by the Secretariat to produce the guidelines contained in recommendation 3 of the Committee on Conferences. In principle, special conferences should not be convened and preparatory committees should not be established if appropriate intergovernmental machinery already existed in the United Nations system and Governments should refrain from creating new Secretariat machinery.

/...

(Mr. Löschner, Federal  
Republic of Germany)

66. He noted that two conferences would have to be incorporated into the draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings contained in document A/35/32/Add.1, namely the global negotiations and the tenth session of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea. The latter would presumably require a certain degree of rescheduling of other meetings, and his delegation therefore supported recommendation 9 of the Committee on Conferences. He said that he would appreciate it if the Secretariat could inform the Committee which meetings it envisaged rescheduling and what financial implications that would have.

67. Mr. RAKAU (German Democratic Republic) stated that the report of the Committee on Conferences (A/35/32) showed that it had not totally fulfilled its mandate under General Assembly resolution 32/72; yet, it had been attending to matters which should be the exclusive responsibility of the Secretariat. As long as that situation persisted, any change in the Committee's terms of reference could not be considered.

68. The method of overprogramming had proved successful and, given that, on average, one third of the time allotted to United Nations bodies had not been utilized because of late starts, early endings, or cancellation of scheduled meetings, a further increase in the overprogramming rate was realistic. However, overprogramming had to be accompanied by exact planning of required capacity and the full utilization of the conference resources allotted. He wondered why the latter question would not be considered until the biennium 1982-1983. The time was perhaps ripe for allocating to those organs, committees and other bodies where the greatest waste had been recorded only the average of funds actually utilized.

69. With respect to the control and limitation of documentation, the decisions already taken should not be undermined. Reports which did not comply with the 32-page rule should remain the exception; the financial situation of the Organization called for economy. His delegation supported the call for adequate explanations of any delays in issuing documents. However, explanations alone were insufficient; Member States were right to expect that the causes would be eliminated, and that the necessary documents would be made available without delay in all working languages.

70. The trend towards an ever-growing number of special conferences should be halted, and his delegation therefore supported the draft resolution contained in paragraph 70 of the report of the Committee on Conferences and the proposed guidelines on the preparation, organization and servicing of special conferences. Whenever a special conference was proposed, due consideration should be given to the contribution that it could be expected to make to the fulfilment of the Organization's main objective of strengthening peace and international security. Special conferences should only be convened if no other appropriate bodies existed to deal with the subject, and they must not lead to an enlargement of the United Nations Secretariat, even temporarily. Many of the problems could be dealt with by the specialized agencies.

71. His delegation was ready to adopt all the recommendations submitted by the Committee on Conferences.

/...

(Mr. Rakau, German  
Democratic Republic)

72. Lastly, he expressed congratulations to the delegation of the Soviet Union on the successful completion of a record space flight by two Soviet cosmonauts.

73. Mr. BOYADJIEV (Bulgaria) expressed his delegation's support for the recommendations of the Committee on Conferences, particularly with respect to the continuation of the practice of overprogramming. Full implementation of the recommendations contained in the report (A/35/32 and Add.1) would lead to optimum distribution of resources for conferences and meetings and to a reduction in operational costs, thereby having a positive effect on the United Nations budget as a whole.

74. His delegation fully supported broader co-operation between the Committee on Conferences and the relevant organs of the United Nations, together with consistent implementation of all measures adopted at previous sessions to enhance the effectiveness of conferences and meetings. It was pleased to note the positive results of overprogramming, and would continue to support all constructive proposals designed to remove the shortcomings which impaired the effective organization of conferences and burdened the budget. It supported the measures taken by the Economic and Social Council with respect to the duration of conferences and meetings and the control and limitation of documentation. The Main Committees could help the Committee on Conferences by studying thoroughly the problem of the number and duration of special conferences and requests for additional conferences not initially scheduled.

75. There was currently a balanced distribution of conference resources among the five basic areas of activity of the Organization. To upset that balance would have serious consequences for the Organization and would be a violation of the Charter. There had, unfortunately, been cases in the past where priority had been given to non-basic areas of activity. The Committee on Conferences should therefore consider a system which would guarantee the optimum balanced distribution of conference resources, should examine the Organization's future needs, and should prepare recommendations to ensure improved co-ordination, pursuant to section II, paragraph 3, of General Assembly resolution 3351 (XXIX). In adopting decision 33/417, the General Assembly had taken a first positive step. The establishment of rigid limits on conference resources would encourage Member States and the Secretariat to redefine activities that were obsolete or of marginal usefulness, so that resources could be released for other areas of activity.

76. His delegation supported the recommendations contained in chapter VIII of the report of the Committee on Conferences, as well as the proposal that the need for effectiveness and economy should be reflected in a General Assembly resolution. It believed that the recommendations could be even more detailed, especially in regard to the full utilization of the conference resources of the Secretariat in servicing special conferences and the implementation of scientific workload standards for conference servicing staff.

/...

AGENDA ITEM 90: FINANCIAL REPORTS AND ACCOUNTS, AND REPORTS OF THE BOARD OF AUDITORS (continued)

(a) UNITED NATIONS (continued) (A/35/5, vols. I-IV, A/35/437)

77. Mr. PALAMARCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that when the Committee had considered the financial reports and accounts of the United Nations, a number of questions had been raised about the title "Controller". In that context, his delegation requested that the Under-Secretary-General for Administration, Finance and Management should be asked to give detailed clarifications both orally and in a written statement.

78. The CHAIRMAN assured the representative of the Soviet Union that note had been taken of his request.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.