

Believing that it is imperative that all States exert further efforts for the adoption of effective measures of disarmament and, more particularly, nuclear disarmament,

Believing also that a world disarmament conference could promote and facilitate the realization of such aims,

1. *Expresses the conviction* that it is most desirable to take immediate steps in order that careful consideration be given to the convening, following adequate preparation, of a world disarmament conference open to all States;

2. *Invites* all States to communicate to the Secretary-General, before 31 August 1972, their views and suggestions on any relevant questions relating to a world disarmament conference, in particular the following:

(a) Main objectives;

(b) Provisional agenda;

(c) Site favoured;

(d) Date and contemplated duration;

(e) Procedures to be adopted for carrying out the preparatory work;

(f) Relationship to the United Nations;

3. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its twenty-seventh session a report containing the views and suggestions communicated to him;

4. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its twenty-seventh session an item entitled "World Disarmament Conference".

*2022nd plenary meeting,
16 December 1971.*

2837 (XXVI). Rationalization of the procedures and organization of the General Assembly

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 2632 (XXV) of 9 November

1970 on the rationalization of the procedures and organization of the General Assembly,

Having considered the report of the Special Committee on the Rationalization of the Procedures and Organization of the General Assembly,¹⁷

Endorsing the view expressed by the Special Committee that the existing rules of procedure were generally satisfactory and that most improvements would be achieved not through changes in the rules of procedure but through their better application,

Conscious of the need to discharge in the most efficient manner the functions incumbent upon it under the Charter of the United Nations,

1. *Decides* to amend its rules of procedure by incorporating therein the modifications set forth in annex I to the present resolution;

2. *Approves* the conclusions of the Special Committee on the Rationalization of the Procedures and Organization of the General Assembly as they appear in annex II to the present resolution;

3. *Declares* the conclusions of the Special Committee to be useful and worthy of consideration by the General Assembly, its committees and other relevant organs;

4. *Decides* that the conclusions referred to in paragraph 2 above shall be reproduced as an annex to its rules of procedure;

5. *Further decides* to review from time to time the progress achieved in rationalizing its work and requests the Secretary-General, as appropriate, to report on the extent to which the conclusions of the Special Committee have been reflected in the practice of the General Assembly.

*2024th plenary meeting,
17 December 1971.*

¹⁷ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 26 (A/8426).*

ANNEX I¹⁸

Amendments to the rules of procedure of the General Assembly

1. Replace the present rule 39 by the following text [*para. 130 of the report of the Special Committee*]:

"If a Vice-President of the General Assembly finds it necessary to be absent during a meeting of the General Committee, he may designate a member of his delegation as his substitute. The Chairman of a Main Committee shall, in case of absence, designate one of the Vice-Chairmen of the Committee as his substitute. A Vice-Chairman shall not have the right to vote if he is of the same delegation as another member of the General Committee."

2. Replace the present rule 60 by the following text [*para. 308*]:

"Records of meetings and sound recordings

"(a) Verbatim records of the meetings of the General Assembly and of the Political and Security Committee (First Committee) shall be drawn up by the Secretariat and submitted to those organs after approval by the presiding officer. The General Assembly shall decide upon the form of the records of the meetings of the other Main Committees and, if any, of the subsidiary organs and of special meet-

ings and conferences. No organ of the General Assembly shall have both verbatim and summary records.

"(b) Sound recordings of the meetings of the General Assembly and of the Main Committees shall be made by the Secretariat. Such recordings shall also be made of the proceedings of subsidiary organs and special meetings and conferences when they so decide."

3. Replace the present rule 69 by the following text [*para. 198*]:

"The President may declare a meeting open and permit the debate to proceed when at least one third of the members of the General Assembly are present. The presence of a majority of the members shall be required for any decision to be taken."

4. Replace the present rule 74 by the following text [*para. 210*]:

"The General Assembly may limit the time to be allowed to each speaker and the number of times each representative may speak on any question. Before a decision is taken, two representatives may speak in favour of, and two against, a proposal to set such limits. When the debate is limited and a representative has spoken his allotted time, the President shall call him to order without delay."

¹⁸ This annex was referred to the Sixth Committee for prior consideration (see *Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-sixth Session, Sixth Committee, 1299th meeting*).

5. Replace the present rule 100 by the following text, to be inserted after the present rule 101 [*para. 175*]:

“Organization of work

“(a) All the Main Committees shall, during the first week of the session, hold the elections provided for in rule 105.

“(b) Each Main Committee, taking into account the closing date for the session fixed by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the General Committee, shall adopt its own priorities and meet as may be necessary to complete the consideration of the items referred to it. It shall at the beginning of the session adopt a programme of work indicating, if possible, a target date for the conclusion of its work, the approximate dates of consideration of items and the number of meetings to be allocated to each item.”

The present rule 101 will become rule 100.

6. Replace the present rule 105 by the following text [*paras. 130 and 165*]:

“Each Main Committee shall elect a Chairman, two Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur. In the case of other committees, each shall elect a Chairman, one or more Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur. These officers shall be elected on the basis of equitable geographical distribution, experience and personal competence. The elections shall be held by secret ballot unless the committee decides otherwise in an election where only one candidate is standing. The nomination of each candidate shall be limited to one speaker, after which the committee shall proceed to the election immediately.”

7. Replace the present rule 107 by the following text [*para. 130*]:

“If the Chairman finds it necessary to be absent during a meeting or any part thereof, he shall designate one of

the Vice-Chairmen to take his place. A Vice-Chairman acting as Chairman shall have the same powers and duties as the Chairman. If any officer of the committee is unable to perform his functions, a new officer shall be elected for the unexpired term.”

8. Replace the present rule 110 by the following text [*para. 198*]:

“The Chairman may declare a meeting open and permit the debate to proceed when at least one quarter of the members of the committee are present. The presence of a majority of the members shall be required for any decision to be taken.”

9. Insert the following rule after the present rule 111 and renumber the present rules 112 to 164 accordingly [*para. 236*]:

“Congratulations to the officers of a Main Committee shall not be expressed except by the Chairman of the previous session—or, in his absence, by a member of his delegation—after all the officers of that Committee have been elected.”

10. Replace the present rule 115 by the following text [*para. 210*]:

“The committee may limit the time to be allowed to each speaker and the number of times each representative may speak on any question. Before a decision is taken, two representatives may speak in favour of, and two against, a proposal to set such limits. When the debate is limited and a representative has spoken his allotted time, the Chairman shall call him to order without delay.”

As a result of the amendment in paragraph 9 above, rule 115 will become rule 116.

ANNEX II

Conclusions of the Special Committee on the Rationalization of the Procedures and Organization of the General Assembly

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I. MANDATE OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE

1. The members of the Special Committee agreed that the existing rules of procedure were generally satisfactory and that most improvements would be achieved not through changes in the rules of procedure but through better application of the existing rules, due account being taken of the conclusions of the Special Committee and of the various committees responsible for reviewing the procedures and organization of the General Assembly [*para. 12 of the report of the Special Committee*].

2. The Special Committee considered, moreover, that it would be desirable to review from time to time the procedures and organization of the General Assembly [*para. 13*].

II. GENERAL ORGANIZATION OF SESSIONS**A. OPENING DATE**

3. The Special Committee is of the opinion that it would not be desirable to change the date fixed for the opening of sessions [*para. 18*].

B. DURATION OF SESSIONS

4. The Special Committee, noting that, despite the appreciable increase in the number of Member States, it has been possible to maintain an average duration of 13 weeks for regular sessions, is of the view that this period should not be changed and that, in any case, the session should end before Christmas [*para. 22*].

5. The Special Committee did not endorse the suggestion that the session should be divided into two parts. The Committee likewise did not endorse the suggestion that the session should theoretically last a whole year and should merely be adjourned after a two-month main session [*para. 23*].

C. RESIDUARY SESSIONS

6. The Special Committee did not endorse the suggestion that a brief meeting of the General Assembly, to be called a "residuary session", might be held at head-of-mission level about the end of April for the discussion of certain administrative and routine questions [*para. 24*].

III. GENERAL COMMITTEE**A. COMPOSITION OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE****1. Increase in membership**

7. The Special Committee decided not to take any action on the question of either maintaining or increasing the present membership of the General Committee [*para. 31*].

8. Furthermore, the Special Committee did not retain the suggestion that the Chairman of the Credentials Committee should be authorized to participate in the work of the General Committee [*para. 32*].

2. Absence of members of the General Committee elected in their personal capacity

9. The Special Committee considers that the problems which arise when the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of a Main Committee cannot attend a meeting of the General Committee would be settled for the most part if the General Assembly decided to increase the number of Vice-Chairmen of the Main Committees [*para. 36*].

10. The Special Committee also considers that, if the General Assembly took such a decision, the Chairman of a Main Committee, in designating a Vice-Chairman as his substitute, should take into account the representative character of the General Committee [*para. 37*].

B. FUNCTIONS OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE

1. Importance of the role of the General Committee

11. The Special Committee considers that the General Committee, in view of the functions conferred on it by the rules of procedure, should play a major role in advancing the rational organization and general conduct of the proceedings of the General Assembly. The Committee is of the opinion that the General Committee should discharge completely and effectively the functions assigned to it under rules 40, 41 and 42 of the rules of procedure the purpose of which is to assist the Assembly in the general conduct of its work [para. 41].

2. Adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

12. The Special Committee recommends that, within the framework of the functions conferred on it by the rules of procedure, and subject to the limitation prescribed in rule 40 as regards the discussion of the substance of an item, the General Committee should examine the provisional agenda, together with the supplementary list and requests for the inclusion of additional items, more attentively and carry out more fully and consistently its functions of recommending with regard to each item its inclusion in the agenda, the rejection of the request for inclusion or its inclusion in the provisional agenda of a future session, as well as of allocating items to the Main Committees regard being had to rules 99 and 101 of the rules of procedure, with a view to ensuring that all items inscribed on the agenda can be taken up by the end of the session [para. 45].

3. Organization of the work of the General Assembly

13. The Special Committee recalls the recommendation, in subparagraph (f) of General Assembly resolution 1898 (XVIII), that the General Committee should meet at least once every three weeks. The Special Committee notes that the recommendation has not been complied with and expresses the hope that the General Committee will be able to hold more frequent meetings, in conformity with rule 42 of the rules of procedure, without thereby interfering with the normal meeting schedule of the plenary and the Main Committees [para. 49].

14. The Special Committee also considers that, in the discharge of the functions conferred by rules 41 and 42 of the rules of procedure and subject to the limitation prescribed in rule 41 regarding the decision of any political question, the General Committee should review the progress of the General Assembly and the Main Committees and should, as required, assist and make recommendations to the President and the Assembly for the co-ordination of the proceedings of the Main Committees and for expediting the general conduct of business [para. 50].

C. WAYS OF FACILITATING THE WORK OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE

1. Preparatory meetings

15. The Special Committee does not consider that it is in a position to make any recommendation with regard to the holding of preparatory meetings of the General Committee [para. 54].

2. Subsidiary organs

16. The Special Committee does not consider that it is in a position to make any recommendation with regard to the establishment of subsidiary organs of the General Committee [para. 58].

IV. AGENDA

A. PRESENTATION AND PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATION OF THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

17. The Special Committee, aware of the need to assist delegations, to the greatest extent possible, to prepare for the work of the General Assembly, recommends to the Assembly that the Secretary-General should be requested:

(a) To communicate to Member States, not later than 15 February, the unofficial list of items proposed for inclusion in the provisional agenda of the Assembly;

(b) To communicate to Member States, not later than 15 June, an annotated list of items which would indicate briefly the history of each item, the available documentation, the substance of the matter to be discussed and earlier decisions by United Nations organs;

(c) To communicate to Member States before the opening of the session an addendum to the annotated list [para. 64].

18. Furthermore, the Special Committee recommends that Member States requesting the inclusion of an item should, if they deem it advisable, make a suggestion concerning its referral to a Main Committee or to the plenary Assembly [para. 65].

B. REDUCTION IN THE NUMBER OF AGENDA ITEMS

1. Non-inclusion of certain items

19. The Special Committee, considering that the General Assembly should take into account the relative importance of agenda items in the light of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, recommends to the Assembly that, in the context of rules 22 and 40 of the rules of procedure, Member States should take special interest in the contents of the Assembly's agenda and, in particular, in deciding on the appropriate solution of questions or on the elimination of items which have lost their urgency or relevance, are not ripe for consideration or could be dealt with and even disposed of equally well by subsidiary organs of the General Assembly [para. 70].

2. Staggering of items over two or more years and grouping of related items

20. The Special Committee considers that the staggering of items over two or more years constitutes one means of rationalizing the procedures of the General Assembly [para. 74].

21. Moreover, the Special Committee recommends to the General Assembly that, as far as possible and appropriate, related items should be grouped under the same title [para. 75].

3. Referral to other organs

22. The Special Committee recommends that the General Assembly should, where relevant, refer specific items to other United Nations organs or to specialized agencies, taking into account the nature of the question [para. 79].

23. The Special Committee also recommends that the General Assembly should give due weight to the debates that have taken place in other organs [para. 80].

4. Non-receivability of certain additional items

24. The Special Committee recommends to the General Assembly that additional items, which are proposed for inclusion in the agenda less than 30 days before the opening of a session, should be included only if the conditions prescribed by rule 15 of the rules of procedure are fully satisfied [para. 84].

C. ALLOCATION OF AGENDA ITEMS

1. Division of work among the Main Committees

25. The Special Committee wishes to draw attention to the importance of a rational distribution of agenda items among the Main Committees. In this connexion, the Committee, recognizing that the structure of the Main Committees gives them specialization and experience, recommends that the allocation of agenda items should be based not only on the workload of the Committees but also on the nature of the item, regard being had to rules 99 and 101 of the rules of procedure [para. 89].

26. The Special Committee also considers that it would be helpful if suggestions concerning the allocation of items were made much earlier so that Member States might have more time to study them [para. 90].

27. Lastly, the Special Committee recommends that the General Committee and the General Assembly should consider, in some cases, the possibility of referring more items directly to the plenary [*para. 91*].

2. *Non-referral of certain items to two or more Committees*

28. The Special Committee recommends to the General Assembly that agenda items should be so allocated as to ensure, as far as possible, that the same questions or the same aspects of a question are not considered by more than one Committee [*para. 95*].

V. ORGANIZATION OF THE WORK OF THE MAIN COMMITTEES

A. FUNCTIONS OF THE INDIVIDUAL COMMITTEES

29. There was general agreement among the members of the Special Committee that a flexible approach should be adopted towards the whole question of the division of work among the Main Committees and that the Committee should not make any recommendation concerning the referral of specific items, in order not to go beyond its field of competence [*para. 97*].

30. The Special Committee, considering that the potential of the seven Main Committees should be utilized to the full, recommends that the General Assembly should ensure a more balanced division of work among the Committees, giving due account to the nature of items. The Committee does not, however, feel that it should specify which items might be transferred from one Committee to another [*para. 98*].

31. The Special Committee, recognizing that the workload of a number of Committees is extremely heavy, is of the opinion that the General Assembly should advise those Committees so to organize their work as to enable them to consider their agenda in the most effective way [*para. 99*].

1. *First Committee*

32. The Special Committee, recognizing that the role of the First Committee is essentially political, recommends that this Committee devote itself primarily to problems of peace, security and disarmament [*para. 103*].

33. The Special Committee, not wishing to make any specific recommendation concerning the allocation of agenda items, did not feel that it should take any decision on the proposal that the reports of the International Atomic Energy Agency and the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation should be submitted to the First Committee [*para. 104*].

2. *Special Political Committee*

34. The Special Committee, reaffirming the major role which must be played by the Special Political Committee and recognizing further that the agenda of that Committee is relatively light, recommends that the General Assembly should consider transferring to the Special Political Committee one or two items usually considered by other Committees with a view to ensuring a better division of work among the Main Committees [*para. 108*].

35. The Special Committee did not endorse the suggestions concerning the renaming of the Special Political Committee [*para. 109*].

3. *Second Committee*

36. The Special Committee did not feel that it should take any decision on the proposals that all the social aspects of development should be dealt with by the Second Committee. Accordingly, it did not endorse the suggestion to change the name of that Committee [*para. 113*].

4. *Third Committee*

37. The Special Committee did not feel it should take a decision on the proposal that some of the items on the agenda of the Third Committee should be transferred to other Main Committees [*para. 117*].

5. *Conflicts of competence among Committees*

38. The Special Committee considers that conflicts of competence among the Main Committees should be avoided whenever possible. Without prejudging the decision to be taken in each individual case, the Committee wishes to draw attention to the existence of this problem and to the advisability for the General Committee and the General Assembly to consider the most effective ways of remedying it [*para. 119*].

B. ROLE OF THE PRESIDING OFFICERS

39. The Special Committee recommends to the General Assembly that the Chairmen of the Main Committees should fully exercise the functions assigned to them in the rules of procedure and, in particular, make use of the prerogatives given them in rule 108 [*para. 123*].

40. The Special Committee also reaffirms that the Chairmen of the Main Committees should be elected on the basis of equitable geographical distribution as well as on that of experience and competence, as provided for in rule 105 of the rules of procedure [*para. 124*].

41. The Special Committee did not endorse the suggestion that candidates should have had at least one year's experience in one of the Main Committees or the suggestion that Chairmen should be elected at the end of the previous session [*para. 125*].

C. NUMBER OF VICE-CHAIRMEN¹⁹

42. From its own experience, the Special Committee recommends to the General Assembly that its subsidiary organs should consider, as far as possible, the designation of three Vice-Chairmen in order to ensure the representative character of their officers [*para. 131*].

D. REPORTS OF THE COMMITTEES

43. The Special Committee, recalling General Assembly resolution 2292 (XXII), recommends to the Assembly that the reports of the Main Committees should be as concise as possible and, save in exceptional cases, should not contain a summary of the debates [*para. 133*].²⁰

VI. MAXIMUM UTILIZATION OF AVAILABLE TIME

A. PLENARY ASSEMBLY

1. *General debate*

(a) *Frequency*

44. The Special Committee, recognizing the unquestionable value of the general debate, considers that it should continue to be held every year and that the time devoted to it should be utilized to the maximum. It wishes to stress also the importance of participation by heads of State or Government, Ministers for Foreign Affairs and other high officials as a means of enhancing the significance of the general debate [*para. 137*].

(b) *Organization of meetings*

(i) *Length of the general debate*

45. The Special Committee feels that the general debate would be more meaningful, as far as organization was concerned, if it took place intensively and without interruption. Its length should not normally exceed two and a half weeks if the time available were utilized to the maximum [*para. 142*].

(ii) *Closure of the list of speakers*

46. Considering that the organization of the general debate would be improved if delegations were required to decide more quickly when to speak, the Special Committee recommends to the General Assembly that the list of speakers wishing to take part in the general debate should be closed at the end of the third day after the opening of the debate [*para. 144*].

¹⁹ For the number of Vice-Chairmen of the Main Committees, see annex I, para. 6, above.

²⁰ For the recommendations concerning the reports of subsidiary organs, see para. 107 below.

(c) *Length of statements*

47. The Special Committee, noting that during the session commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the United Nations it had been possible to hear a large number of speakers during a relatively short period without limiting the duration of statements, considers that this result was due to a better utilization of the time available and not to the imposition of a limitation on the length of speeches [para. 147].

48. The Committee notes that during recent sessions of the General Assembly the average length of speeches has been 35 minutes and expresses the hope that delegations will ensure that their statements will not be excessively long [para. 148].

(d) *Submission of written statements*

49. The Special Committee considers that the submission of written statements should not be formally instituted with regard to the general debate [para. 152].

2. *Debate on items already considered in Committee*

50. The Special Committee is of the opinion that rule 68 of the rules of procedure has been applied judiciously and with satisfactory results [para. 155].

3. *Non-utilization of the rostrum*

51. The Special Committee thinks that it would be useful to draw the attention of representatives to the possibility of speaking without going to the rostrum. It considers, however, that in all cases it is for representatives to decide whether they prefer to speak from their seats or from the rostrum, whether on a point of order, for an explanation of vote or in exercise of their right of reply [para. 157].

4. *Presentation of the reports of the Main Committees*

52. The Special Committee wishes to recall the recommendation made in 1947 by the Committee on Procedures and Organization of the General Assembly that Rapporteurs should not read out their reports in plenary meetings.²¹ It wishes to stress that the presentation of reports in plenary meetings should be limited to brief introductory statements [para. 158].

53. The Special Committee recommends also that the General Assembly should confirm the practice whereby certain related reports of a non-controversial nature may be introduced simultaneously to the plenary Assembly by the Rapporteur [para. 159].

B. MAIN COMMITTEES

1. *Nomination of officers*

54. The members of the Special Committee agreed that the nomination of candidates involved a significant loss of time. They also recognized that the terms of rule 105 of the rules of procedure, which provided that elections should be held by secret ballot, no longer corresponded to the present practice, since in most cases, as a result of prior consultations, there was only one candidate for each post and voting by secret ballot was therefore superfluous [para. 161].

55. The Special Committee, bearing in mind particularly the financial implications of such a procedure, did not retain the suggestion that nominations should be made in writing [para. 162].

56. Furthermore, in view of the dictates of courtesy and the possibility that cases might arise in which nominees would not be known until the last moment, the Special Committee did not deem it advisable to dispense completely with the oral nomination of candidates [para. 163].

57. The Special Committee considers that the nomination of candidates should be limited to one statement for each candidate, after which the Committee would proceed to the election immediately. The Special Committee considers, how-

ever, that the general principle that elections are held by secret ballot should be retained [para. 164].²²

2. *Commencement of work*²³

58. The Special Committee recommends that all the Main Committees, with the possible exception of the First Committee, should begin their work on the working day following the receipt of the list of items referred to them by the General Assembly [para. 170].

59. The Special Committee also recommends that the First Committee should be ready to meet whenever no plenary meeting of the Assembly is being held [para. 171].

3. *Progress of work*²⁴

60. The Special Committee recommends that the Main Committees should from time to time review the progress of their work [para. 176].

4. *General debate in Committee*

61. The Special Committee, while recognizing the unquestionable usefulness and importance of the general debate, considers that Chairmen should encourage the Main Committees:

(a) To recognize the advisability of shortening the general debate, whenever that is possible without detriment to the work of the Committees;

(b) To extend, whenever appropriate, the practice of holding a single debate on related and logically linked agenda items [para. 180].

62. The Special Committee recognizes that a general debate on questions previously considered by a United Nations organ and covered by a report of the organ concerned should be retained. The Committee, however, draws the attention of the Chairmen of the Main Committees to the possibility of consulting their Committees in every case when a general debate on a certain item does not seem to be needed. The Chairmen may resort to this practice to ascertain in particular whether the Committees desire to hold a general debate on every question referred to them by other organs [para. 181].

63. At the same time, the Special Committee wishes to reaffirm that the general debate serves a necessary and very useful purpose in the work of the Main Committees and that its organization should in no circumstances be changed without the consent of the Committees concerned, which therefore should decide on the applicability of the above-mentioned suggestions [para. 182].

64. The Special Committee did not deem it appropriate to make a recommendation concerning the suggestion that delegations sharing the same point of view could use a spokesman who would express those views in a single statement. Nor did the Committee retain the suggestion that the consideration of certain items already debated in previous sessions might be introduced by specially appointed rapporteurs who would summarize the main issues emerging from previous debates [para. 183].

5. *Concurrent consideration of several agenda items*

65. The Special Committee considers that in certain cases, when a Main Committee cannot proceed with its discussion of one item, it should be prepared to begin considering the next item on its agenda [para. 187].

6. *Establishment of sub-committees or working groups*

66. The Special Committee wishes to remind the General Assembly of the desirability of the Main Committees' making use of sub-committees or working groups [para. 188].

²² For the relevant amendment to the rules of procedure, see annex I, para. 6, above.

²³ For the election of officers of the Committees, see annex I, para. 5 (a), above.

²⁴ For the programme of work, see annex I, para. 5 (b), above.

²¹ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Second Session, Plenary Meetings*, vol. II, annex IV, document A/388, para. 26.

C. MEASURES APPLICABLE BOTH TO THE PLENARY ASSEMBLY AND TO THE MAIN COMMITTEES

1. *Opening of meetings at the scheduled time*

67. The members of the Special Committee agreed that the General Assembly would operate much more efficiently if the presiding officers made a special effort to open meetings at the scheduled time [para. 190].²⁵

68. The Special Committee did not endorse the suggestion to have meetings begin at 9.30 a.m. and 2.30 p.m. in view of the practical difficulties that such a measure would entail [para. 192].

2. *List of speakers*

69. The Special Committee recommends to the General Assembly that the President of the Assembly or the Chairman of a Main Committee should, soon after the beginning of the debate on an item, indicate a date for the closing of the list of speakers. He should endeavour to have the list of speakers closed at the latest after one third of the meetings allocated to the item have been held [para. 202].

70. Moreover, the Special Committee considers that speakers should, as far as possible, avoid putting down their names to speak on a given item and at the same time indicating an alternative meeting if they are unable to keep to their original schedule [para. 203].

71. Finally, the Special Committee wishes to reaffirm the practice whereby presiding officers should invite representatives to speak in the order of their inscription on the list of speakers, on the understanding that those prevented from doing so should normally be moved to the end of the list, unless they have arranged to change places with other representatives [para. 204].

3. *Limiting the length of speeches or number of speakers*

72. The Committee wishes to stress that the amendment on this subject²⁶ is of a purely technical nature, its only purpose being to limit the number of representatives who could speak on a proposal submitted under rules 74 and 115²⁷ of the rules of procedure [para. 210].

73. With regard to the general question of setting a time-limit on interventions, the Special Committee, while recognizing that, in so far as possible, statements should be kept brief so as to allow all delegations to present the views of their Governments, considers that no rigid rule on the question could be applied [para. 211].

4. *Explanations of vote*

74. The Special Committee considers that, in explaining their votes, delegations should limit their statements to an explanation, as brief as possible, of their own votes and should not use the occasion to reopen the debate [para. 216].

75. The Special Committee also considers that presiding officers should be encouraged to use, whenever they deem it appropriate, their powers under rules 90 and 129²⁸ of the rules of procedure [para. 217].

76. Finally, the Special Committee recommends to the General Assembly that a delegation should explain its vote only once on the same proposal, in either a Main Committee or a plenary meeting, unless the delegation considers it essential to explain it in both meetings. It recommends further that the sponsor of a draft resolution adopted by a Main Committee should refrain from explaining its vote during the consideration of that draft resolution in the plenary unless it deems it essential to do so [para. 218].

5. *Right of reply*

77. The Special Committee recommends to the General Assembly that delegations should use restraint in the exercise of their right of reply, both in plenary meetings and in the

Main Committees, and that their statements in exercise of that right should be as brief as possible [para. 223].

78. The Special Committee recommends, furthermore, that statements made in the exercise of the right of reply should be delivered, as a general rule, at the end of meetings [para. 224].

6. *Points of order*

79. The Special Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following text as a description of the concept of a point of order [para. 229]:

“(a) A point of order is basically an intervention directed to the presiding officer, requesting him to make use of some power inherent in his office or specifically given him under the rules of procedure. It may, for example, relate to the manner in which the debate is conducted, to the maintenance of order, to the observance of the rules of procedure or to the way in which presiding officers exercise the powers conferred upon them by the rules. Under a point of order, a representative may request the presiding officer to apply a certain rule of procedure or he may question the way in which the officer applies the rule. Thus, within the scope of the rules of procedure, representatives are enabled to direct the attention of the presiding officer to violations or misapplications of the rules by other representatives or by the presiding officer himself. A point of order has precedence over any other matter, including procedural motions (rules 73 [114²⁹] and 79 [120³⁰]).

“(b) Points of order raised under rule 73 [114²⁹] involve questions necessitating a ruling by the presiding officer, subject to possible appeal. They are therefore distinct from the procedural motions provided for in rules 76 [117³¹] to 79 [120³⁰], which can be decided only by a vote and on which more than one motion may be entertained at the same time, rule 79 [120³⁰] laying down the precedence of such motions. They are also distinct from requests for information or clarification, or from remarks relating to material arrangements (seating, interpretation system, temperature of the room), documents, translations etc., which—while they may have to be dealt with by the presiding officer—do not require rulings from him. However, in established United Nations practice, a representative intending to submit a procedural motion or to seek information or clarification often rises to ‘a point of order’ as a means of obtaining the floor. The latter usage, which is based on practical grounds, should not be confused with the raising of points of order under rule 73 [114²⁹].

“(c) Under rule 73 [114²⁹], a point of order must be immediately decided by the presiding officer in accordance with the rules of procedure; any appeal arising therefrom must also be put immediately to the vote. It follows that as a general rule:

“(i) A point of order and any appeal arising from a ruling thereon is not debatable;

“(ii) No point of order on the same or a different subject can be permitted until the initial point of order and any appeal arising therefrom have been disposed of.

“Nevertheless, both the presiding officer and delegations may request information or clarification regarding a point of order. In addition, the presiding officer may, if he considers it necessary, request an expression of views from delegations on a point of order before giving his ruling; in the exceptional cases in which this practice is resorted to, the presiding officer should terminate the exchange of views and give his ruling as soon as he is ready to announce that ruling.

“(d) Rule 73 [114²⁹] provides that a representative rising to a point of order may not speak on the substance of the matter under discussion. Consequently, the purely procedural nature of points of order calls for brevity. The presiding officer is responsible for ensuring that statements made on a point of order are in conformity with the present description.”

²⁵ For the quorum, see annex I, paras. 3 and 8, above.

²⁶ For the relevant amendment to the rules of procedure, see annex I, paras. 4 and 10, above.

²⁷ Now rule 116 (see annex I, para. 9, above).

²⁸ Now rule 130.

²⁹ Now rule 115.

³⁰ Now rule 121.

³¹ Now rule 118.

7. *Congratulations*

80. The Special Committee is of the opinion that it would be better to retain the current practice of the plenary Assembly whereby congratulations to the President are confined to brief remarks included in the speeches made during the general debate [para. 235].

81. With regard to subsidiary organs of the General Assembly, the Special Committee recommends that, in the case of a newly established organ or of the rotation of officers on an existing one, congratulations to the Chairman should be expressed only by the temporary Chairman and congratulations to other officers should be expressed only by the Chairman [para. 237].³²

8. *Condolences*

82. The Special Committee recommends to the General Assembly that condolences addressed to a delegation on the death of a prominent person or in the event of a disaster should be expressed solely by the President of the General Assembly, by the Chairman of a Main Committee or by the Chairman of a subsidiary organ on behalf of all members. Where circumstances warrant it, the President of the General Assembly might call a special plenary meeting for that purpose [para. 242].

83. The Special Committee moreover takes note of the practice whereby the President of the General Assembly, on behalf of all members, dispatches a cable to the country concerned [para. 243].

9. *Roll-call votes*

84. The Special Committee, while believing that there is no need to change the rules of procedure relating to roll-call votes, recommends that delegations should endeavour not to request such a vote except when there are good and sound reasons for doing so [para. 247].

10. *Electronic devices*

85. The Special Committee did not believe that it should express any views on the possible use of an electronic voting system by all Committees, since the question of the installation of mechanical means of voting was included in the draft agenda of the twenty-sixth session of the General Assembly [para. 249].

86. The Special Committee did not retain the suggestion that a mechanical or electronic timing device might be installed in the General Assembly Hall and the Main Committee rooms [para. 250].

VII. RESOLUTIONS

A. SUBMISSION OF DRAFT RESOLUTIONS

1. *Date of submission of draft resolutions*

87. The Special Committee recommends to the General Assembly that draft resolutions should be submitted as early as possible so as to give debates a more concrete character. It considers, however, that no rigid rule should be established in the matter, since it is for delegations to determine, in each case, the most appropriate moment for submitting draft resolutions [para. 254].

88. So as to ensure that debates take shape as quickly as possible without making it mandatory for delegations to submit a formal draft resolution, the Special Committee also considers that delegations might resort more often to the possibility of circulating draft resolutions as informal working papers which would provide a basis for the discussion but whose contents would be strictly provisional [para. 255].

2. *Submission of draft resolutions in writing*

89. Because of the appreciable loss of time that such a procedure could entail, the Special Committee decided not to endorse the suggestion that proposals and amendments should be submitted in writing only [para. 256].

³² For congratulations in the Main Committees, see annex I, para. 9, above.

3. *Consultations*

90. The Special Committee, recognizing the indisputable value of consultations, believes that delegations should explore every avenue for arriving at negotiated texts. It considers, however, that the initiative for such consultations must rest solely with the delegations concerned and can, under no circumstances, be dictated in mandatory provisions [para. 258].

91. The Special Committee also believes that the Chairmen of the Main Committees should be invited to bear in mind the possibility of establishing, where necessary, working groups for the purpose of facilitating the adoption of agreed texts. Such groups may be open, as appropriate, to interested delegations. It does not, however, consider it advisable to contemplate the establishment of such working groups whenever two or more draft resolutions have been introduced on the same matter [para. 259].

4. *Number of sponsors*

92. The Special Committee did not endorse the suggestion that the number of sponsors of a draft resolution should be limited [para. 260].

93. The Special Committee does, however, wish to draw attention to the practice whereby the sponsors of a proposal decide whether other delegations can become co-sponsors [para. 261].

5. *Time-lapse between the submission and the consideration of draft resolutions*

94. The Special Committee, while recognizing the difficulties experienced by some delegations in consulting their Governments within the time laid down by rules 80 and 121³³ of the rules of procedure, does not deem it advisable to propose an amendment to those rules [para. 265].

B. CONTENT OF RESOLUTIONS

95. The Special Committee is of the opinion that the wording of resolutions, to be effective, must be as clear and succinct as possible. It recognizes, however, that only the delegations concerned can decide upon the content of the proposals which they are sponsoring [para. 267].

96. The Special Committee also wishes to emphasize that the text of a draft resolution should not go beyond the competence of the Committee in which it is submitted. Where, however, it is suggested that a draft resolution does so, the Special Committee feels that it is up to the Committee concerned to take a decision in the matter [para. 268].

C. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

1. *Financial controls*

97. The Special Committee feels that the provisions of rules 154³⁴ and 155³⁵ of the rules of procedure are satisfactory and should be strictly applied [para. 272].

98. The Special Committee is also of the opinion that the financial implications of draft resolutions should be viewed in terms of an over-all assessment of priorities and that the principal organs should give careful consideration to the draft resolutions adopted by their subsidiary organs where such drafts call for the appropriation of funds [para. 273].

2. *Work of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions*

99. The Special Committee recognizes that the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions should meet more frequently, but does not consider itself qualified to make detailed recommendations on the matter [para. 275].

3. *Resolutions setting up new organs*

100. While acknowledging that new organs should be set up only after mature consideration, the Special Committee

³³ Now rule 122.

³⁴ Now rule 155.

³⁵ Now rule 156.

believes that it would be inadvisable to amend the rules of procedure and lay down hard and fast rules in the matter [para. 277].

D. VOTING PROCEDURE

1. Required majority

101. The Special Committee considers that rules 88 and 127³⁶ of the rules of procedure should be left unchanged [para. 282].

102. The Special Committee also considers that the suggestion referred to in paragraph 279 of the report is unacceptable and, moreover, goes beyond its mandate [para. 283].

2. Measures to accelerate procedures

103. The Special Committee, recalling the recommendations which it has made elsewhere concerning debate on items already considered in Committee (see para. 50 above) and roll-call votes (see para. 84 above), feels that it is inadvisable to make any changes in the relevant provisions of the rules of procedure [para. 287].

3. Consensus

104. The Special Committee considers that the adoption of decisions and resolutions by consensus is desirable when it contributes to the effective and lasting settlement of differences, thus strengthening the authority of the United Nations. It wishes, however, to emphasize that the right of every Member State to set forth its views in full must not be prejudiced by this procedure [para. 289].

E. REDUCTION IN THE NUMBER OF RESOLUTIONS

105. The Special Committee did not endorse the suggestions aimed at reducing the number of resolutions adopted by the General Assembly [para. 293].

VIII. DOCUMENTATION³⁷

A. REDUCTION IN THE VOLUME OF DOCUMENTATION

106. The Special Committee recommends that the General Assembly should:

(a) Draw attention to the provisions of its resolutions 2292 (XXII) and 2538 (XXIV) summarized in document A/INF/136, and stress the need for strict adherence to them, not only in letter, but also in spirit, by Member States and also, in the light of its internal rules, by the Secretariat;

(b) Instruct its subsidiary organs to include in the agenda of each session an item on the control and limitation of the documentation of the organ itself in the spirit of paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 1272 (XIII) [para. 300].

B. PREPARATION AND DISTRIBUTION OF DOCUMENTS

107. The Special Committee recommends to the General Assembly that:

(a) Timely distribution of documents in all working languages should be scrupulously observed;

(b) 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;

(c) Reports to be considered by the General Assembly should be as brief as possible and contain precise information confined to a description of the work done by the organ concerned, to the conclusions it has reached, to its decisions and to the recommendations made to the Assembly; the reports should include, where appropriate, a summary of proposals, conclusions and recommendations. As a rule, no previously issued material (working papers and other basic documents) should be incorporated in or appended to such reports, but, where necessary, referred to;

(d) Taking into account the needs of Member States, the number of copies of reports and other United Nations docu-

ments should, whenever appropriate, be limited, i.e., they should be issued in the /L. series [para. 304].³⁸

C. RECORDS OF MEETINGS AND SOUND RECORDINGS

108. The Special Committee recommends that rule 60, as revised,³⁹ should be applied in accordance with the following observations:

(a) Summary records should continue to be provided for the General Committee and for all Main Committees other than the First Committee;

(b) The General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, should decide annually whether the option that has traditionally been approved for the Special Political Committee to have, on specific request, transcriptions of the debates of some of its meetings, or portions thereof, should be maintained;

(c) The provision of summary records to subsidiary organs should be reviewed periodically by the General Assembly in the light of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the use of minutes instead of summary records,⁴⁰ and of the comments of the Secretary-General⁴¹ and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions⁴² thereon;

(d) Sound recordings should be kept by the Secretariat in accordance with its practice [para. 309].

IX. SUBSIDIARY ORGANS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

A. REDUCTION OF THE NUMBER OF ORGANS

109. The Special Committee recommends that the General Assembly should review, either periodically or when considering their reports, the usefulness of its various subsidiary organs [para. 313].

110. The Special Committee also recommends that the General Assembly should consider the possibility of merging some of these organs [para. 314].

B. COMPOSITION OF ORGANS

111. The Special Committee considers that membership of a body depends on the nature and function of that body and that it cannot, therefore, be subject to any general rule [para. 318].

112. The Special Committee is of the opinion that subsidiary organs of the General Assembly should, where appropriate, have the authority to invite a Member State which is not a member of the organ concerned to participate without vote in the discussion of a matter which the organ considers to be of particular interest to that Member State [para. 319].

113. The Special Committee is also of the opinion that the composition of subsidiary organs should be subject to periodic change [para. 320].

114. Finally, the Special Committee considers that visits of subsidiary organs away from their normal meeting places should be authorized by the General Assembly only when the nature of the work renders such visits essential [para. 321].

C. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS

115. The Special Committee recommends to the General Assembly 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 rests with the organ concerned [para. 323].

X. OTHER QUESTIONS

A. CREDENTIALS OF DELEGATIONS

116. The Special Committee, while aware of the problems posed by the non-recognition by the General Assembly of a

³⁸ For the recommendations concerning the reports of the Main Committees, see para. 43 above.

³⁹ See annex I, para. 2, above.

⁴⁰ E/4802.

⁴¹ E/4802/Add.1.

⁴² E/4802/Add.2.

³⁶ Now rule 128.

³⁷ See also resolution 2836 (XXVI).

delegation's credentials, feels that it is not in a position to make any proposal on the matter [para. 327].

B. ROLE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

117. The Special Committee is of the opinion that the Secretary-General should play an active role in making suggestions with regard to the organization of sessions, it being understood that the final decision on the recommendations he makes lies with the General Assembly [para. 331].

C. SECRETARIAT

118. The Special Committee considers that the question of the reorganization of the Secretariat, however valid it might be, does not come within its terms of reference. It is of the opinion, therefore, that it should not make any recommendation on the matter [para. 333].

D. GUIDANCE REGARDING GENERAL ASSEMBLY PROCEDURE AND ASSISTANCE TO PRESIDING OFFICERS

1. Preparation of a manual on procedure

119. The Special Committee recommends that the General Assembly should consider requesting the Secretary-General to prepare a systematic and comprehensive compilation of the conclusions which the Assembly may adopt on the basis of the reports of the Special Committee and of the Joint Inspection Unit, this compilation to form an annex to the rules of procedure of the General Assembly [para. 339].

2. Repertory of Practice of United Nations Organs

120. The Special Committee, recognizing the usefulness of the *Repertory of Practice of United Nations Organs*, expresses the hope that it will be brought up to date as quickly as possible [para. 341].

3. Preparation of a repertory of practice on the rules of procedure of the General Assembly

121. The Special Committee did not consider that it should endorse the proposal to issue a repertory of practice on the rules of procedure of the General Assembly [para. 344].

4. Reminders of previous recommendations

122. It was suggested that at the beginning of the session the President of the General Assembly should remind the Assembly of, and particularly invite the attention of the Chairmen of Main Committees to, the recommendations for improving the methods of work which were specifically approved in General Assembly resolution 1898 (XVIII). While there was general agreement on the principle underlying that suggestion, the Special Committee did not feel that it need make any specific recommendation in that regard [paras. 345 and 346].

123. The Special Committee did not retain the suggestion that the report of the *Ad Hoc* Committee on the Improvement of the Methods of Work of the General Assembly⁴³ should be reissued on account of the financial implications that such a measure would entail [paras. 345 and 346].

5. Assistance in procedural matters

124. The Special Committee noted that it was not possible to assign a member of the Office of Legal Affairs continuously to each of the Main Committees but that legal advice was always furnished, either orally or in writing, when requested [para. 348].

125. The Special Committee did not consider that it should make any recommendation on the proposal that the President of the General Assembly and the Chairmen of Main Committees should enlist several assistants under them, both from the Secretariat and, wherever possible, from the delegations themselves, to whom they would allocate items on the agenda for the purpose of closely following them up

⁴³ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Eighteenth Session, Annexes*, agenda item 25, document A/5423.

with the delegations directly concerned and expediting the progress of the General Assembly [paras. 347 and 348].

E. STUDIES OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE

126. The Special Committee did not consider that it should retain the suggestions concerning the insertion in the rules of procedure of the General Assembly of provisions similar to those in the rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Council [para. 352].

127. The Special Committee took note of the proposal concerning a comparative study of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and those of the governing bodies of the specialized agencies and suggests that the United Nations Institute for Training and Research should consider undertaking such a project [para. 353].

128. Lastly, the Special Committee recommends to the General Assembly that the Secretariat should be instructed to undertake a comparative study of the versions of the General Assembly's rules of procedure in the various official languages in order to ensure their concordance [para. 354].

F. SPECIAL TRAINING PROGRAMME

129. The Special Committee, aware of the training problems facing delegations, particularly as regards newly arrived representatives, suggests that the United Nations Institute for Training and Research should consider ways of helping to solve these problems [para. 356].

G. REGIONAL GROUPS

130. The Special Committee endorses the suggestion that the names of chairmen of the regional groups for the month should be published in the *Journal of the United Nations* and recommends that it should be left to the Secretariat to decide how often it should be applied [paras. 357 and 358].

2862 (XXVI). Credentials of representatives to the twenty-sixth session of the General Assembly

The General Assembly

Approves the report of the Credentials Committee,⁴⁴ except with regard to the credentials of the representatives of South Africa.

*2027th plenary meeting,
20 December 1971.*

2863 (XXVI). Co-operation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity

The General Assembly,

Taking note of the request by thirty-six African States⁴⁵ for the holding early in the year 1972, in an African country member of the Organization of African Unity, of meetings of the Security Council devoted solely to the measures to be taken with a view to implementing the various resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly on decolonization, the struggle against *apartheid* and racial discrimination in Africa,

Taking note of the statement made by the Chairman of the Organization of African Unity before the General Assembly on 24 September 1971,⁴⁶

Recalling its resolutions 2011 (XX) of 11 October 1965, 2193 (XXI) of 15 December 1966 and 2505

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, *Twenty-sixth Session, Annexes*, agenda item 3, document A/8625.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, agenda item 100, documents A/8494 and Add.1.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, *Twenty-sixth Session, Plenary Meetings*, 1938th meeting, paras. 2-57.