

UNITED NATIONS

General  Assembly

FIFTIETH SESSION
Official Records

FIFTH COMMITTEE
2nd meeting
held on
Thursday, 21 September 1995
at 3. p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 2nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. VILCHEZ ASHER (Nicaragua)

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

CONTENTS

ELECTION OF THE VICE-CHAIRMEN AND RAPPORTEUR

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

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 the publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-794, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

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

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.5/50/SR.2
28 November 1995
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

ELECTION OF THE VICE-CHAIRMEN

1. The CHAIRMAN informed the Committee that the Group of African States had nominated Mr. Ammar Amari (Tunisia) for one of the two offices of Vice-Chairman. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to elect Mr. Ammar Amari to the office of Vice-Chairman by acclamation.
2. It was so decided.
3. Mr. Ammar Amari (Tunisia) was elected Vice-Chairman by acclamation.
4. The CHAIRMAN informed the Committee that the Group of Eastern European States required more time to agree on a candidate for the office of Vice-Chairman and suggested that the Committee should postpone the election of the second Vice-Chairman.
5. It was so decided.

ELECTION OF THE RAPPORTEUR

6. The CHAIRMAN informed the Committee that the Group of Western European and Other States had nominated Mr. Peter Maddens (Belgium) for the office of Rapporteur. Noting that no other candidates had been nominated, he took it that the Committee wished to refrain from holding a secret ballot.
7. It was so decided.
8. Mr. Peter Maddens (Belgium) was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.
9. The CHAIRMAN noted that the General Committee of the General Assembly had endorsed the Secretary-General's recommendations on the organization of the fiftieth session and of future sessions of the Assembly (A/BUR/50/1). He stressed, in particular, the importance of the recommendations on the quorum and on punctuality, as well as the recommendation that Member States should avoid making proposals requesting new reports of the Secretary-General. The number of reports to be submitted directly affected the timeliness of their availability, which was essential for the successful conduct of proceedings.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK (A/C.5/50/L.1)

Programme of work (A/C.5/50/L.1)

10. The CHAIRMAN, referring to the provisional schedule for the Committee's work said that, in preparing it, the Secretariat had taken particular account of the availability of documents, the status of which was described in a note by the Secretariat (A/C.5/50/L.1). Noting that the Committee's workload had not diminished, owing to the multiplication of United Nations activities, he emphasized the need for rationalization. He recalled that his predecessor had

/...

submitted a draft resolution on the subject, consideration of which had been postponed until the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

11. He suggested that the Committee should begin with the general debate on the proposed programmed budget for the biennium 1996-1997 and complete the first reading thereof before the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. He reviewed the agenda items to be considered before and after that event, stating that the second reading of the proposed programme budget would take place in late November. He noted that consideration of items 116 (Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations) and 119 (Improving the financial situation of the United Nations) had been postponed. The aim, in the case of item 116, was to devote more time to other important matters, and, in the case of item 119, to allow the High-level Open-ended Working Group on the Financial Situation of the Organization to report to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session.

12. Mr. MUÑOZ (Spain), speaking on behalf of the European Union, recalled that when the report of the High-level Open-ended Working Group on the Financial Situation of the United Nations had been submitted to the General Assembly, the European Union had expressed its concern regarding the deteriorating financial situation of the Organization which Mr. Connor, the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management, had emphasized in his speech. He proposed that agenda item 119 (Improving the financial situation of the United Nations) should be considered without delay, rather than during the second week of December, and that, for that purpose, the Committee should be provided with updated and detailed information on the deterioration of the Organization's cash-flow situation. That would enable it to give the earliest possible consideration to the solutions proposed, particularly those put forward by Mr. Connor.

13. Mr. DJACTA (Algeria) noted that the documents concerning agenda item 119 dated back to the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly (see page 9 of document A/C.5/50/L.1). He believed that before the measures proposed by Mr. Connor or other measures were considered, it would be useful for the Secretariat to provide information on the financial situation of the United Nations, indicating the amount of the contributions which had or had not been paid by each Member State; that would also facilitate the consideration of the budget.

14. Ms. RODRIGUEZ ABASCAL (Cuba) proposed that consideration of agenda item 115 (Financial reports and audited financial statements, and reports of the Board of Auditors) should be brought forward to October, since the documents were available. Item 116 (Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations) should be considered as soon as possible, so that a decision could finally be taken - that had not been the case at the forty-ninth session - and enough time would be available for consultations. Also, the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Accountability, management improvement and oversight in the United Nations system (part II)" should be considered under agenda item 116.

15. She proposed that the reports of the Office of Internal Oversight Services presented under agenda item 152 (Report of the Secretary General on the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services) should also be

considered under item 118 (Proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997). A similar decision had been taken with respect to the report of that Office on the management audit of the civilian component of the United Nations Protection Force which would be examined concurrently under agenda item 130 (Financing of the United Nations Protection Force, the United Nations Confidence Restoration Operation in Croatia, the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force and the United Nations Peace Forces headquarters).

16. She asked whether the Sixth Committee had, as previously decided, considered the question of reform of the internal system of justice in the United Nations Secretariat. Such a study was essential. It was also necessary for the Committee to come to a decision with respect to item 162 (Programme planning) before deciding on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997.

17. Mr. GOKHALE (India) pointed out that during the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Organization in which heads of State and Government would be participating, the delegations of many countries, particularly developing countries, would not have the means to participate fully in the discussions. He therefore proposed that the first reading of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 should not be undertaken until after 27 October 1995 and that other less important items should be discussed in its place. He shared the Cuban delegation's view that the Sixth Committee should give its opinion on the legal implications of reform of the internal system of justice within the Secretariat before the Committee dealt with the financial and administrative consequences of the proposed budget submitted by the Secretariat.

18. Mr. ALOM (Bangladesh), who shared the concerns expressed by India, proposed consideration of the most important matters (Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations, Proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997, Programme planning and Human Resources Management) should be deferred to the end of October. He endorsed the views expressed by Spain on behalf of the European Union regarding agenda item 119 (Improving the financial situation of the United Nations) but emphasized that it could not be considered as a separate issue. Thus, in his opinion, it would be preferable not to discuss items related to that question (Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations, Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations, Proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997, Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peace-keeping operations, Human resources management) until after agenda item 119 had been considered, and, above all, after the special commemorative meeting, which could have a positive effect.

19. Mrs. PEÑA (Mexico) said that agenda item 119 should be considered without delay and that, in view of the importance of the issue, the Secretary-General should present a report on the financial situation of the Organization. She recalled that at the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly, the Fifth Committee had had to be content with an oral presentation from the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management. She understood the concerns of certain delegations regarding the date of the first reading of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 and agreed with the

suggestion made by the Indian delegation, that the Committee could start with less controversial issues, for example agenda items 121 (Pattern of conferences) and 122 (Scale of assessments). Lastly, she proposed that consideration of agenda items 116 (Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations) and 162 (Programme planning), which had implications for the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997, should be moved up.

20. Mr. MENKVELD (Netherlands) drew the Committee's attention to a question relating to agenda item 141 (Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peace-keeping operations), namely, the calculation of the assessments of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, both of which had become Members of the Organization in 1993. Recalling the decision to divide the 1992-1994 assessment rate approved for the former Czechoslovakia between the two States, he pointed out that the question of the contributions of those two countries to the budget for peace-keeping operations had yet to be resolved. Under the existing interim arrangement, the two Member States did not contribute to the financing of peace-keeping operations; instead their respective shares were divided up among all the other countries. It was thus in the interest of all Member States to settle the matter, on the understanding that whatever arrangement was adopted could be reviewed in light of whatever decision the General Assembly came to. In that connection, his delegation was in favour of a comprehensive review of the ad hoc system for apportioning peace-keeping expenses.

21. Mrs. ALMAO (New Zealand) supported the proposed work programme, including the timing of the first reading of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997. Since budgetary documents including the relevant reports of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and of the Committee for Programme Coordination (CPC) had been available for some time and given the serious cash-flow problems affecting the Organization, she was in favour of starting the general discussion on that agenda item as early as possible. She supported the observations made by Spain on behalf of the European Union regarding the need to obtain detailed information on the Organization's cash position and would like to receive up-to-date information on the subject as soon as possible, although she would be willing to wait until December to consider the issue, as provided for in the proposed work programme.

22. Mr. HANSON (Canada) fully supported the broad outlines of the work programme proposed by the Chairman. In view of the Organization's financial situation, it was vital that the Committee should begin discussion of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 as soon as possible, in order to be able to devote sufficient time to it. If the first reading was postponed, the Committee might find itself having to consider the question under stressful conditions which would be most unfortunate. On the other hand, Canada agreed with those who recommended that the Committee should deal without delay with the question of the financial position of the Organization, if only to find out exactly how grave the situation was, since it would certainly have a bearing on the programme budget. Lastly, while he appreciated the concern of those delegations which had problems due to meetings being scheduled at the same time as important diplomatic events, he pointed out that the dates had been known long enough in advance to allow all concerned to make the necessary

arrangements. It was therefore to be hoped that the delegations affected would give their support to those wishing to make an early start in considering the programme budget and other crucial issues before the Committee.

23. Mr. BALUCH (Pakistan) agreed with the overall organization of the work programme but felt that some flexibility was needed. Firstly, the Committee should, as a matter of urgency, be informed of the Organization's financial position. Ideally, that should have had the highest priority even above that of the programme budget. Since it had not been possible, some attempt should be made to bring forward the start of the discussions on the financial situation in order to have the necessary information when considering the programme budget. Secondly, while the date of the summit of Heads of State and Government had, admittedly, been known for some time, it was none the less true that the week in question (21-25 October) would be extremely busy and arduous and some adjustment of the work programme for the week was warranted.

24. Mr. JESENSKY (Slovakia), responding to the Netherlands delegation on the question of determining the assessments for contributions by the Czech Republic and Slovakia to the funding of peace-keeping operations, stressed that it was an issue which had important financial implications; as the Committee would recall, it had been pending for almost three years and had already been the subject of lengthy and difficult deliberations. He was confident that a solution would be found that would take into account both his country's capacity to pay and its status as a new Member of the Organization. The officers of the Committee would undoubtedly take the issue up and he thanked them in advance for any solutions they might propose.

25. Mr. SRAMEK (Czech Republic) endorsed the proposal by the representative of the Netherlands regarding the inclusion of the question in the agenda of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly. In fact, the issue had been raised in 1993 when the Czech Republic, newly admitted to the United Nations and battling the difficulties arising from its transition to a market economy and its separation from Slovakia, had requested membership in group C. Member States had not been able to reach agreement at that time and consideration of the matter had been postponed. Since that time, one might have expected the question to have been clarified by the work of the High-level Open-ended Working Group on the Financial Situation of the Organization, but no tangible result had yet been achieved.

26. Mrs. RODRIGUEZ ABASCAL (Cuba) said that she wished to associate herself with the observations of the Indian delegation because the problems to which it had referred were shared by the delegations of the majority of developing countries.

27. Mr. ELZIMAITY (Egypt) said that he, too, endorsed the Indian proposal that consideration of the proposed programme budget should be postponed until after the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. The Committee could hear the statement by the Secretary-General and the report of the Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) on 4 October, but begin its deliberations at a later date. That should not prevent the Committee from completing its work on time; that had been proved

by experience in 1993, when the documents had not been available until November rather than in May, as was the case in 1995.

28. Mr. TOYA (Japan) said that no effort should be spared to rationalize the Committee's work; the task had taken on even greater importance in view of the unprecedented financial crisis of the Organization. The Committee had a large number of other items to consider and the situation made it necessary to set priorities. His country endorsed the idea of moving forward consideration of agenda item 119 (Improving the financial situation of the United Nations) in order to bring the Committee up to date on the situation. With regard to agenda item 118 (Proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997), which was the most urgent, the Committee should begin its consideration of that item as soon as possible, perhaps in October.

29. Mr. SHARP (Australia) said he was aware that the Committee was facing a dilemma: on the one hand, it would be preferable to begin consideration of the budget documents, which had been available for some time already, and of the comments of ACABQ; on the other hand, it was true that it was important to take into account the meetings which would be held during the second half of October. Australia was therefore ready to join any consensus which might arise with regard to the date on which the Committee would begin its consideration of the budget. It was also important to take advantage of the conference services which would be available during the first weeks of October, especially since it was essential for the Committee to be brought up to date as early as possible on the cash-flow situation of the Organization and the extent of the financial crisis.

30. Mrs. SHEAROUSE (United States of America) said that she unreservedly endorsed the proposed programme of work. It should be followed strictly, in particular with regard to the proposed programme budget, consideration of which should begin at the earliest possible date.

31. Mrs. EMERSON (Portugal) said that she wished to associate herself with the statement made by Spain on behalf of the European Union. She congratulated the Secretariat and ACABQ on having issued the budget documents so early; that would help the Committee to avoid the difficulties that it had faced in 1993. As for the comments made on the programme of work, there was no real opposition between developing and developed countries: it was for the smaller delegations, whichever they might be, that the situation posed problems. It was important to take account of that fact, in particular with regard to the critical period emphasized by the representative of Pakistan. Work should, however, begin as soon as possible and programme planning should, as in the past, be considered at the same time as the programme budget.

32. Mr. GOUMENNY (Ukraine) endorsed the proposed programme of work. A large part of the available time should naturally be set aside for the debate on the budget. On the other hand, it did not seem appropriate, in a budget year, to address the question of human resources management (agenda item 163) during the first month of the session.

33. The question raised by the Netherlands regarding the assessments of the Czech Republic and Slovakia was a very important one. Under its rules of

procedure, it was for the General Assembly, in plenary meeting, to decide, on the recommendation of the General Committee, to add an item to its agenda, but the question should be considered by the Fifth Committee at the current session, for example under agenda item 141 (Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peace-keeping operations). In that connection, he wished to point out that there had been no documentation issued since the forty-seventh session on agenda item 141 (b), which related to Ukraine. If there were no new documents, perhaps the earlier documents should be recirculated as documents of the fiftieth session.

34. His delegation shared the views of the European Union and other delegations which had stressed the priority that the Committee should accord to agenda item 119 (Improving the financial situation of the United Nations). The Committee's main task was, in fact, to ensure that the United Nations could operate under normal financial conditions; otherwise it could not fulfil its mandate under the Charter.

35. Mr. ACAKPO-SATCHIVI (Secretary of the Committee) said that delegations had had the Secretary-General's budget proposals for more than three months and the recommendations of ACABQ for nearly one month. It did not seem wise to postpone consideration of the matter; indeed, consideration should begin as soon as possible in view of the lengthy negotiations which would be needed in order to produce a resolution at the end of the session. He suggested, therefore, that the introduction of the proposed programme budget and the reports of ACABQ and the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) should take place on 4 October and that a general debate of one to two weeks' duration should be scheduled from that date. As for the first reading of the budget, the Bureau would review the question and inform the Committee of its views at its next meeting.

36. Since the members of the Committee agreed that consideration of agenda item 119 should begin as soon as possible, he planned to consult with the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management concerning the date on which the Secretariat would be ready to submit a report, or at least an oral report, on the financial situation of the Organization. He would inform the Committee on that matter at its next meeting.

37. In response to the comments by the representative of Cuba concerning programme planning, he pointed out that the Fifth Committee itself, having failed to reach a consensus, had decided in July to postpone the matter until the fiftieth session. That was why it had been proposed that the question should be considered at the same time as the proposed programme budget.

38. The problem of the assessments of the Czech Republic and Slovakia for the financing of peace-keeping operations and the question of reclassifying Ukraine had political aspects which the Bureau would consider as soon as possible.

The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.