



General Assembly

Seventy-fourth session

First Committee

27th meeting

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New York

Official Records

Chair: Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Bolivia (Plurinational State of))

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

(spoke in English)

Agenda items 89 to 105 (continued)

Action on all draft resolutions and decisions submitted under disarmament and international security agenda items

The Chair: This morning the First Committee will continue to take action on all draft resolutions and draft decisions submitted under the agenda items before it — 89 to 105. Thereafter, we will consider the draft provisional programme of work and timetable of the First Committee for 2020, as contained in A/C.1/74/CRP.5.

The Committee will now turn to the remaining draft proposals listed under cluster 5, “Other disarmament measures and international security”, as set out in informal paper No. 4. I shall first give the floor to those delegations wishing to make general statements under cluster 5, which are limited to five minutes.

I call on the representative of the Russian Federation on a point of order.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) *(spoke in Russian)*: I wish to draw the attention of representatives to a situation that the Russian Federation believes to be inadmissible. Just a few days ago, an anonymous letter was circulated on behalf of the Bureau containing information about a meeting at which draft decision A/C.1/74/L.57/Rev.1 was discussed. For some reason, the anonymous letter outlined a position and a line of conduct on behalf of the Russian Federation, stating that:

“If the Russian draft resolution fails, Russia will attempt to block consensus on forwarding a programme of work to the General Assembly for the next session. If the draft resolution is adopted, we might decide to adopt the two remaining items.”

(spoke in Russian)

It then goes on to explain what the Chair would do in such circumstances and so on. The anonymous letter ends with a call for a vote in favour of the programme of work if it is put to a vote. We believe that such anonymous letters constitute an attempt to manipulate the opinions of delegations and pressure them, especially since this letter — and I wish to stress this once again — was supposedly circulated on behalf of one of the members of the Bureau.

I would therefore like to point out to representatives that this piece of paper — it should not be referred to as a document — casts a shadow over the work of the Bureau, which I believe has demonstrated effectiveness and impartiality during this session. Furthermore, we have not authorized a single member of the Bureau or representative to explain the Russian Federation’s position. The Russian Federation has always worked in an open, transparent and constructive manner. Whenever someone has asked us to elaborate on our position, we have always been willing to do so. We consider such episodes to be unacceptable for both the work of the First Committee and the development of relations among representatives.

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I repeat that we believe this episode to be extraordinary and completely unacceptable. I would ask the Chair to pay particular attention to this matter and to try and find out who is behind this kind of subversive diplomacy and is circulating these kinds of anonymous letters.

The Chair: As Chair of the Committee, I am really shocked by the information that the representative of the Russian Federation just shared. That was the first time I heard about the matter, and we will convene a meeting of the Bureau to address this specific issue. I will make sure to bear in mind the information just shared by the representative of Russia.

We shall now continue with our programme of work, namely, hearing general statements under cluster 5.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I shall make a short statement. I made a statement yesterday (see A/C.1/74/PV.26) on this same issue, so I will be brief and avoid repeating myself.

I simply wanted to draw the attention of representatives to the fact that the Russian delegation, while demonstrating its constructive position and readiness to take into account the views of other delegations, has agreed to make changes to the original text of draft decision A/C.1/74/L.57/Rev.1, entitled "Improving the effectiveness of the work of the First Committee". We are proposing a gradual approach to deal with the issue of free access by national delegations to United Nations events, as provided for in the Headquarters Agreement of 1947.

I just want to draw attention to the fact that, in its current version, the draft decision does not directly demand that the next session of the First Committee be transferred to Geneva or Vienna. However, we believe that the issue of national delegations' access to United Nations events and conferences is a very acute problem that must remain in the focus of the First Committee and the General Assembly. That is why we have proposed the gradual approach that I just mentioned. The draft decision is now aimed at again enabling the Secretariat and the Secretary-General to take steps to resolve the issue of visas. It also gives the United States another opportunity to revise its policy on issuing visas to representatives of certain States who are travelling to the country to take part in United Nations events.

We have also heard many comments about the fact that the issue of visas does not pertain to the First

Committee. We are not asking the First Committee to tackle this problem; rather, we are asking the First Committee to draw the attention of the authorities of the United States and the Secretariat to the fact that this problem has remain long unresolved and is thereby undermining the work of the First Committee and other elements of the United Nations disarmament machinery.

Furthermore, our draft decision is now closely linked to the report of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country (A/74/26), with references to its specific paragraphs. I therefore repeat that we are not necessarily focusing the attention of the First Committee on trying to urge any particular delegation to resolve this problem; we are simply trying to stress the point that the First Committee expresses its concerns with regard to this acute issue. Without resolving this issue, it will be difficult to speak about the effectiveness of the work of the First Committee and the United Nations Disarmament Commission.

The Chair: Before the Committee proceeds to take action on the draft decision under cluster 5, we will hear from delegations wishing to explain their positions.

Mr. Knight (United States of America): We must continue to strongly urge every Member State to vote against draft decision A/C.1/74/L.57/Rev.1. As we have said, we continue to feel that it is entirely inappropriate for the First Committee to adopt a draft decision on host country issues. The General Assembly has allocated agenda item 165, on relations with the host country, to the Sixth Committee, and the Committee has debated the item. The Sixth Committee adopts a draft resolution every year specifically on the report of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country. That process has been, and continues to be, robust. The United States has engaged with the Russian Federation in the negotiations of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country's recommendations, which were adopted by consensus on 29 October. Again, we also continue to engage in the negotiations of the Sixth Committee's draft resolution, based on the report of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country, which is also traditionally adopted by consensus.

Furthermore, the draft decision threatens, in one way or another, to move the First Committee to Geneva or Vienna. Moving a Main Committee of the General Assembly out of New York would undermine the integrity and unity of the General Assembly. It would represent a dismemberment of a principal organ

of the United Nations and would also significantly disadvantage those delegations that do not have representation in Vienna and Geneva. That should not be entertained in any way.

For those reasons, we urge our colleagues to vote against the draft decision and reject Russia's effort to circumvent the established Sixth Committee process by pursuing a draft decision on the host country report in the First Committee.

Mr. Laukkanen (Finland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union member States. The candidate countries the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this statement.

We are not in a position to support draft decision A/C.1/74/L.57/Rev.1. I wish to underline that the draft decision does not belong in the First Committee, and the course of action proposed in the draft decision does not improve the effectiveness of the work of the First Committee.

Ms. Claringbould (Netherlands): In addition to the explanation of vote just delivered by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union, the Netherlands would like to add the following remarks in its national capacity.

The Netherlands will vote against draft decision A/C.1/74/L.57/Rev.1, on improving the effectiveness of the work of the First Committee, for the following reasons.

First, the draft decision pre-empts the course of action in another Committee that is mandated to deal with the issue under consideration, namely, the Sixth Committee, which considered the report of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country (A/74/26) the day before yesterday under its dedicated agenda item — 165. The negotiations on draft resolution A/C.6/74/L.19 on this topic are currently ongoing in the Sixth Committee. The draft resolution will subsequently be adopted in the General Assembly. We should not pre-empt that course of action by welcoming the report of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country, as is proposed in the first preambular paragraph of draft decision A/C.1/74/L.57/Rev.1, or make decisions on recommendations in that report, which is not yet endorsed by the General Assembly, as in paragraph (d).

Secondly, the requests set out in paragraphs (a) and (b) of the draft decision concerning a report of the Secretary-General on the compliance and implementation of the host country with the 1947 Agreement between the United Nations and the United States of America regarding the Headquarters of the United Nations is not an issue that falls within a specific mandate of the First Committee, which deals with issues concerning disarmament and international security. It should therefore be addressed in the appropriate committee, namely, the Committee on Relations with the Host Country. In that regard, I refer to resolution 2819 (XXVI).

Draft decision A/C.1/74/L.57/Rev.1 therefore violates the procedure regarding resolutions that have been adopted by the General Assembly. For those reasons, the Netherlands intends to vote against the draft decision.

Mr. Balouji (Islamic Republic of Iran): I wish to deliver my delegation's explanation of vote on draft decision A/C.1/74/L.57/Rev.1. As one of the delegations affected by the United States legal policies and actions, we in fact appreciate the Russian initiative on the effective functioning of the First Committee. We believe that it could contribute to real and inclusive participation by all Member States in the Committee.

The Islamic Republic of Iran attaches great importance to multilateralism as an effective means of contributing to international peace and security. That position is fully in line with the well-known practice by the international community of promoting multilateralism in the area of disarmament. We recall that the main *raison d'être* of the United Nations is to maintain international peace and security through multilateralism. In other words, international cooperation, the peaceful settlement of disputes, dialogue and confidence-building measures through disarmament and arms-control treaties make an essential contribution to the creation of multilateral and cooperative relations among countries. However, in recent years we have witnessed the continuous and progressive erosion of multilateralism in the fields of arms regulation, non-proliferation and disarmament by different United States Administrations. The United States decisions to withdraw from several treaties in that regard and prevent the effective participation of other delegations in discussions and negotiations at the United Nations only reveal the tip of the iceberg in its attempts to fragment multilateralism.

On different occasions, my delegation has explained to the Committee the problem that it is facing due to the United States legal policies and actions, which have severely impeded our ability to conduct normal diplomatic activities. All delegations are aware of the fact that the United States has turned United Nations visas, travel bans and movement restrictions into a foreign-policy cudgel against diplomats of the countries it does not view as its friends. Those actions have even been extended to the families of the diplomats concerned. Imposing such inhumane sanctions is a blatant violation of the basic human rights of the affected individuals. The United States legal actions are in complete contradiction of its explicit obligations under the 1947 Agreement between the United Nations and the United States of America regarding the Headquarters of the United Nations, the Charter of the United Nations, the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and even various draft resolutions adopted by the First Committee calling for the promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament.

We are appreciative of the sympathy and understanding shown to us by various delegations. However, we should emphasize that we need meaningful decisions and concrete measures to solve the problem. So far, the foreseen channels and means in that regard, including the Committee on Relations with the Host Country, have not been able to prevent the United States abuse of its privilege as the host country; rather, the United States has prevented the effective and smooth activity of several delegations at the United Nations, including at the First Committee.

The turbulence in adopting the programme of work of the Committee and the way it was adopted is evidence and a result of the United States irresponsible behaviour, which must end. We therefore reiterate our call on and appeal to the international community to ensure that the United States strictly abides by its obligations as the host country. The earlier that we tackle this problem, the easier it will be to prevent it from becoming chronic.

The Chair: The Committee will now proceed to take action on draft decision A/C.1/74/L. 57/Rev.1, entitled "Improving the effectiveness of the work of the First Committee".

I give the floor to the Secretary of the Committee.

Ms. Elliott (Secretary of the Committee): Draft decision A/C.1/74/L.57 was submitted by the

representative of the Russian Federation on 17 October. Subsequently, revised draft decision A/C.1/74/L. 57/Rev.1 was submitted on 30 October. The sponsors of the draft decision are listed in document A/C.1/74/L.57/Rev.1.

The Chair: A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Belarus, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Burundi, Cambodia, China, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Russian Federation, Serbia, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Zimbabwe

Against:

Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Bahamas, Barbados, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Marshall Islands, Monaco, Montenegro, Namibia, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Samoa, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Vanuatu

Abstaining:

Algeria, Angola, Austria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belize, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Cyprus, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Fiji, Ghana, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Philippines, Qatar, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saudi Arabia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Switzerland, Thailand,

Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Yemen, Zambia

Draft decision A/C.1/74/L.57/Rev.1 was rejected by 18 votes to 69, with 72 abstentions.

The Chair: I will now call on delegations wishing to make statements in explanation of vote after the voting.

Mr. Roethlin (Austria): Austria aligns itself with the statement delivered before the voting by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union member States.

I take the floor in my national capacity to briefly explain Austria's vote on draft decision A/C.1/74/L.57/Rev.1, entitled "Improving the effectiveness of the work of the First Committee". Austria's abstention in the voting on the draft decision was guided by Austria's own strong commitment as a host country to the United Nations. Austria remains firmly committed to its obligations related to respective host-country agreements with the United Nations and other international organizations based in Vienna. In that context, we wish to underline the importance of discussing and addressing any concerns about the implementation of host-country agreements with the host country directly, as well as in the foreseen forums, in particular the Committee on Relations with the Host Country.

Austria advocates a strong, effective and efficient United Nations. Procedural debates should not come at the expense of substance. As stated, inter alia, in Austria's national statement under the thematic debate on disarmament machinery (see A/C.1/74/PV.21), we regret that the precious time we have at our hands to discuss substance was shortened in this year's First Committee. This year's session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission could not even hold formal meetings. We are deeply concerned about those developments and hope that this negative trend will soon be reversed.

As multilateralism is increasingly under strain, we should be especially cautious about changing practices that have been established since the founding of the United Nations. The spirit of multilateralism should embody the ambition to build and finally reach consensus. That is particularly true when the ambition for change has the potential to substantially impact all

Member States. Strenuous efforts would have to be made to take such decisions by consensus.

Ms. Jáquez Huacuja (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I reiterate that Mexico regrets that several delegations are experiencing difficulties in ensuring that their representatives are able to participate in United Nations meetings. We convey our solidarity to those delegations. We also commend the Russian Federation for its consultations and changes made to draft decision A/C.1/74/L.57/Rev.1. However, deliberations on and possible solutions to this issue should be addressed by another Committee. We do not believe that the First Committee should make a decision on this issue, nor do we believe that the Committee is the ideal forum in which to air grievances about the host State. The First Committee itself deals with very controversial and sensitive issues for the international community and is now being uncharacteristically politicized without substantive consideration being given to its own agenda items.

My country wishes to make it clear that we are open to a change in and break from the status quo of the disarmament machinery, to which the First Committee belongs. The draft decision is setting a precedent for that machinery, as it opens the door to ad hoc draft resolutions that could alter aspects of the disarmament forums and the work of the General Assembly itself. We call on all Member States to hold dialogue and diplomatic negotiations and respect and use multilateral forums to settle their disputes.

Mr. Khaldi (Algeria): My delegation asked for the floor to explain its vote after the voting on draft decision A/C.1/74/L.57/Rev.1, entitled "Improving the effectiveness of the work of the First Committee", in which my delegation abstained.

The position of my country regarding the visa-issuance issue is well reflected in the final document of the eighteenth Summit Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM), held in Baku last month. The final document of the Summit first underlines the critical role of the host countries of the United Nations Headquarters and offices in preserving multilateralism and facilitating multilateral diplomacy and intergovernmental norm-making processes. Secondly, it calls upon all States that host the United Nations Headquarters and offices to facilitate, in accordance with their obligations under the related Headquarters Agreement and the Vienna

Convention on Diplomatic Relations, the presence of the representatives of Member States in relevant meetings of the United Nations. Thirdly, it recalls that the provisions of the Headquarters Agreement shall be applicable irrespective of the bilateral relations existing between Governments and the host country. Fourthly, it expresses serious and grave concern about the denial of or delay in the issuance of entry visas to the representatives of any NAM member State by the host country of the United Nations Headquarters. Fifthly, it reiterates that political considerations shall not interfere with the provision of facilities required under the Headquarters Agreement for Member States to participate in United Nations activities.

Ms. Bonkougou (Burkina Faso), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

In that respect, we call on the host country to fully comply with its obligations related to the issuance of visas to the representatives of Member States participating in United Nations activities. With regard to the draft decision in question, we believe that a comprehensive assessment should be carried out within the Committee on Relations with the Host Country to fully resolve, *inter alia*, the problems of visa issuance by the host country. Moreover, an action-oriented draft resolution, as envisaged by the eighteenth Summit Conference of NAM Heads of State and Government, demanding the fulfilment of the host country's responsibilities by virtue of the Headquarters Agreement and the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, including the timely issuance of entry visas and the removal of arbitrary movement restrictions, is an appropriate measure as a starting point to address this issue.

Ms. Bhandari (India): I have asked for the floor to explain India's vote on draft decision A/C.1/74/L.57/Rev.1, on improving the effectiveness of the work of the First Committee. The First Committee, as part of the global disarmament-machinery triad, embodies the international community's commitment to collectively address disarmament and international security issues. It is therefore of paramount importance that the First Committee continue to function in an effective, efficient, objective and inclusive manner. India is strongly opposed to the politicization of the work of the First Committee. It is regrettable that issues pertaining to the denial of visas to representatives of some Member States have not yet been resolved. We look forward to the early resolution of all pending issues,

thereby ensuring the participation of Member States in the work of the First Committee. It is in that context that we abstained in the voting on the draft decision.

Mr. Masmajan (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I take the floor to deliver my delegation's explanation of vote on draft decision A/C.1/74/L.57/Rev.1, on which Switzerland abstained in the voting. While we can understand some of the considerations that led to the submission of the draft decision, we nonetheless have reservations about its approach. We remain of the view that the issue raised by the draft decision must first be addressed in the Committee on Relations with the Host Country, and not directly by the First Committee.

Moreover, we believe that important questions remain regarding the process that the decision proposes to follow, in particular concerning the tasks assigned to the Secretary-General and the evaluation and interpretation of the reports required of him. That also applies to the reference in the draft decision to paragraph 165 (j) and (p) of the report (A/74/26) of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country, on which this year's Sixth Committee has not yet decided. Indeed, the work of the First Committee should not be linked to that of other Committees with unrelated mandates and prerogatives.

Finally, taking note of the issues raised by the draft decision, we urge the delegations concerned, first and foremost, to quickly find a solution to their differences in order to enable the First Committee to again work effectively in future, in particular by adopting its programme of work without delay and by consensus.

Mr. Khan (Pakistan): I take the floor to deliver Pakistan's explanation of vote on draft decision A/C.1/74/L.57/Rev.1, entitled "Improving the effectiveness of the work of the First Committee".

Pakistan attaches great importance to the United Nations disarmament machinery, of which the First Committee is an integral part. Pakistan fully supports all efforts to strengthen the three mutually reinforcing pillars of the disarmament machinery and endeavours aimed at working by consensus. The First Committee has a unique role as a forum for norm-setting and holding in-depth deliberations on a range of disarmament issues. At a time of growing mistrust, rising global tensions and unprecedented technological advancements, the role of the Committee as a platform for dialogue and cooperation takes on even greater significance.

My delegation views with great concern the visa-related issues raised by certain fellow Member States during the Committee's proceedings. The non-issuance of visas to official representatives participating in United Nations meetings is not an acceptable practice and should be avoided at all costs. That is a matter that should be resolved through the appropriate channels and forums. While we completely understand the consternation about the regrettable practice of the non-issuance of visas to official representatives, we believe that it should not in any way be allowed to have a bearing on the work and functioning of the Committee.

Our abstention in the voting on the draft decision should be seen as our support for preserving and strengthening the disarmament machinery and should not in any way be viewed as condoning the practice of non-fulfilment of obligations under the Host Country Agreement. We stress that those issues should be resolved in a spirit of cooperation and in accordance with international law, including the Headquarters Agreement.

Ms. Skerten (New Zealand): I take the floor to explain New Zealand's vote on draft decision A/C.1/74/L.57/Rev.1, entitled "Improving the effectiveness of the work of the First Committee".

The New Zealand delegation is well able to understand the frustrations that have led to the submission of the draft decision. However, aware of the obligations under the Headquarters Agreement, it would be our hope that the issues underlying the draft decision can be satisfactorily resolved in an expeditious manner, including, if necessary, in the Committee on Relations with the Host Country, without this body needing to take up such drastic options as have been put forward in the text.

A decision to move the meetings of the First Committee in 2020 away from the General Assembly Headquarters would be very significant, with far-reaching implications of a staffing, funding and logistical nature. We remain concerned that we have not yet had an opportunity to give those potential consequences the thorough consideration that even an in-principle decision along the lines of draft decision A/C.1/74/L.57/Rev.1 would warrant. Quite aside from a consideration of the costs that such a change would entail — for example, for the Secretariat, which unfortunately, as we have all experienced in recent weeks, is already in the midst of a financial crisis — there are key questions

regarding the capacity of all the United Nations membership to be able to participate in First Committee meetings held elsewhere as fully as they do here in New York. That is a consideration that smaller States, such as New Zealand, must bear in mind, even more so for States, including some of our Pacific Island neighbours, that do not have representation at possible alternative venues, including the two specifically mentioned in the draft decision. A decision to move meetings away from United Nations Headquarters could seriously impact on the ability of such States to participate in and make an effective contribution to the First Committee. For those reasons, New Zealand voted against the draft decision.

Mr. Situmorang (Indonesia): My delegation wishes to explain its vote on draft decision A/C.1/74/L.57/Rev.1, entitled "Improving the effectiveness of the work of the First Committee".

Let me begin by expressing our serious concern about the difficult situation that some delegations have to encounter with regard to issues pertaining to the fulfilment of host-country responsibilities. We appreciate the Russian delegation's efforts in drafting the draft decision and we welcome the recent revision that took a gradual and measured approach. At the same time, the Sixth Committee is addressing the issue concerned in its deliberations on an annual draft resolution (A/C.6/74/L.19) on the report (A/74/26) of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country. While fully supporting discussions to resolve this important issue, we are of the view that the Committee on Relations with the Host Country and its report to the Sixth Committee is the most appropriate platform for this endeavour. We therefore suggest that the elements of an approach contained in the draft decision be considered in the deliberations of the Sixth Committee.

Based on that consideration, Indonesia abstained in the voting on the draft decision. We will closely follow the progress made on this issue in the Committee on Relations with the Host Country, the Sixth Committee and other relevant forums, especially regarding how it will address delegations' visa and access concerns. We stand ready to revisit this discussion again in due course.

Mr. Tozik (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): I take the floor to deliver an explanation of vote after the voting. The Republic of Belarus voted in favour of draft decision A/C.1/74/L.57/Rev.1, as we have always adhered to the principles that constitute the cornerstone

of international relations, namely, multilateralism, mutual respect and compliance by Member States with their obligations under the agreements to which they are party. As we have previously noted, it is unacceptable to impede the legitimate — and I repeat legitimate — right of States to take part in the Committees of the General Assembly. The Organization was initially created as a multilateral and universal platform, with comprehensive representation and without discrimination of any State. We continue to believe that the host country must comply with its obligations regarding unimpeded access to United Nations Headquarters by national delegations of all Member States, as provided for in the Host Country Agreement. This issue should not be overlooked by simply transferring it to the Committee on Relations with the Host Country; it is a far-reaching problem with significant consequences and affects all bodies of the United Nations system and all delegations that take part in the work of the Organization. We regret that the draft decision was not adopted, and we hope that the current situation of continued obstacles to visa issuance will be resolved quickly, without preconditions.

The Chair returned to the Chair.

Mr. Fiallo Karolys (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I take the floor to deliver my delegation's brief explanation of vote on draft decision A/C.1/74/L.57/Rev.1, entitled "Improving the effectiveness of the work of the First Committee".

Ecuador is not indifferent to the situation that we face today, and our abstention in the voting does not alter my country's belief in the importance of complying with the Host Country Agreement in all cases, without exception. In that regard, my delegation already expressed solidarity with the affected delegations during the general debate of the First Committee (see A/C.1/74/PV.9), and we reiterate that support today.

However, Ecuador does not believe that the First Committee should consider this matter, even more so as we are facing significant challenges to the disarmament machinery. Moreover, beyond the possible logistical challenges of convening First Committee meetings in Vienna, Geneva or any other United Nations offices, Ecuador is opposed to any of the Main Committees of the General Assembly convening outside the General Assembly Headquarters. For that reason, we abstained in the voting.

Mr. Mohd Nasir (Malaysia): Malaysia takes the floor to explain its vote on draft decision A/C.1/74/L.57/

Rev.1, entitled "Improving the effectiveness of the work of the First Committee".

As has already been stated several times here at the First Committee, Malaysia expresses its sympathy and solidarity with all delegations whose participation in the Committee has been affected. Malaysia expressed its concern about this issue in our deliberations on the programme of work of the Committee. The full and effective participation of delegations in the Committee is an important matter that must be ensured. We truly hope that the parties involved will continue to consult with one another, in order to solve the problems raised.

Malaysia would like to thank the main sponsor for submitting the draft decision. Malaysia particularly appreciates the constructive approach and in-depth consultations and engagement with Member States, as well as the fact that feedback was incorporated into the revised draft decision. Malaysia has been following the deliberations on this issue very closely and carefully. In that regard, we would like to highlight several points.

First, Malaysia reiterates the need for all States to work together to strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of the First Committee. The First Committee serves as the main multilateral platform for the international community to address challenges, bridge gaps and build consensus on disarmament and the international security discourse. It is of the utmost importance for all of us here to strive for the success of the Committee's work and deliberations. We must ensure that any disputes are resolved amicably and diplomatically so that the Committee can focus on its substantive responsibilities. That is especially true today, given the pressing and uncertain global geopolitical dynamics. We all should and must preserve the credibility and effectiveness of the First Committee.

Secondly, Malaysia notes the concerns expressed by a number of delegations, including on issues relating to entry visas. Before the start of the meeting, I talked to a few friends whose delegations have been affected. In our view, this issue must be resolved, in accordance with international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, the 1947 Headquarters Agreement and the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations. We fully respect the sovereign right of all countries to effective representation at the United Nations. As such, it is important for the matter to be rightfully addressed by the mandated platform within the United Nations. We are of course cognizant of the

recent report (A/74/26) of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country and the ongoing deliberations within the Sixth Committee on draft resolution A/C.6/74/L.19 pertaining to the report. Continued engagement among all relevant stakeholders, in a spirit of genuine cooperation and peaceful collaboration, is vital. Malaysia believes that the First Committee should not create a parallel track to discuss this issue on top of what is already being discussed in the mandated platform within the United Nations.

Thirdly, the First Committee was established several decades ago, here at the United Nations Headquarters, in New York, as a meeting of minds, with the full and equal participation of all Member States. Although we understand that the draft decision is suggesting a step-by-step incremental approach, rather than a drastic proposal for relocation of venue, we are of the view that this consideration will not contribute to solving underlying issues. Even if the First Committee were to move to or convene in another venue, that would not guarantee that other problems of a similar nature would not arise in the future. For that reason, we should not allow such a possibility at this juncture; rather, the problem should instead be thoroughly addressed and resolved here, in New York, and not moved to another venue while there it remains unsolved.

Following a careful consideration of all important related principles, as outlined, Malaysia has arrived at its current position, namely, to vote against draft decision A/C.1/74/L.57/Rev.1, entitled "Improving the effectiveness of the work of the First Committee". In that same vein, let me reiterate Malaysia's sympathy and solidarity with the countries whose participation in the Committee has been unfortunately affected. We sincerely hope that the matter will be resolved by the relevant stakeholders in a constructive manner, in line with international law.

If you, Sir, will allow me, I wish to say that I am currently based in New York, supported by one colleague from our capital, who is seated behind me. Since the start of the seventy-fourth session of the First Committee several weeks ago, we have both divided our time, energy and attention trying to cover numerous issues under the purview of the Committee. That experience has so far been both challenging and enriching. At the start of our assignment, we set ourselves two goals: first, to defend and champion Malaysia's positions and policies on various issues pertaining to international peace and security; and

secondly, to hold quality deliberations and intellectual debates with distinguished diplomats from all corners of the world, exchanging thoughts and views to widen our limited horizons.

To a certain extent, I can say that our two goals have largely been met at this year's session of the First Committee, but I also believe that there are areas for improvement in the Committee's work. As we will soon conclude the work of the seventy-fourth session of the First Committee, my delegation will take stock of its new knowledge, lessons learned and so on. We will, of course, come back to the seventy-fifth session of the First Committee next year wanting to again achieve our goals, and it is our fervent hope that next year the First Committee will once again serve as a venue for important deliberations among all of us on issues of international peace and security. I believe that that hope is not ours alone; it is shared by many delegations in this room.

To conclude, although the Committee did not adopt the draft decision A/C.1/74/L.57/Rev.1, Malaysia strongly believes in the importance of all Member States upholding the sanctity and credibility of the First Committee. We should make every possible effort to protect this important machinery, because it is ours to protect. As such, let us make that hope a reality by arriving at an agreement, including through the consensus adoption of the programme of work for the seventy-fifth session of the First Committee next year. Only then can we be reassured of the continued protection and preservation of the First Committee, which is an important and sacred part of the disarmament machinery.

The Chair: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote after the voting.

I give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation to deliver a statement on behalf of a group of countries.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): With your permission, Sir, I would like to deliver a statement on behalf of a group of States, not in explanation of vote but to comment on the outcome of the voting. I will deliver this statement on behalf of the following States: Algeria, Belarus, Venezuela, Zimbabwe, Cuba, China, Nicaragua, Syria, Burundi and my own country, the Russian Federation.

(spoke in English)

Following the failure to adopt draft decision A/C.1/74/L.57/Rev.1, “Improving the effectiveness of the work of the First Committee”, proposed by the Russian Federation, we are compelled to deliver the following statement.

We drastically revised the initial draft decision in order to encompass all constructive input and concerns of Member States. Its final version is based on a progressive, step-by-step approach aimed at solving the problem resulting from United States non-compliance with the 1947 Headquarters Agreement. Since neither party to the agreement has so far been able to resolve the issue of unfettered access for Member State delegations to United Nations Headquarters or offered alternative options in that regard, we had no choice but to propose a possible solution.

It is regrettable to note that the majority of First Committee members opted to disassociate themselves from that legitimate approach. We cannot help but consider that outcome as a clear acknowledgement of the fact that one particular Member State has the right to violate its obligations under international agreements and pursue discriminatory policies against other Member States, in contravention of the Charter of the United Nations. In practice, the current denial of United States visas directly affects the activities of the United Nations main bodies, including the First Committee. Our objective is to bring the First Committee back to its normal functioning by ensuring the full-fledged participation of all delegations in its work. We reserve the right to continue raising this issue and call on all Member States to stand as one to support the main United Nations principle of equal rights for its Members.

I will repeat that the following delegations associate themselves with this statement: Algeria, Belarus, Venezuela, Zimbabwe, Cuba, China, Nicaragua, Syria, Burundi and my own country, the Russian Federation.

The Chair: The Committee has thus concluded action on all draft resolutions and decisions submitted under the agenda items allocated to it.

Before proceeding to the adoption of the draft programme of work for 2020, I will suspend the meeting for 15 minutes.

The meeting was suspended at 11.15 a.m. and resumed at 11.35 a.m.

Programme of work

The Chair: Our last order of business is to adopt the draft provisional programme of work and timetable of the First Committee for 2020, as contained in document A/C.1/74/CRP.5, which has been distributed to all delegations.

As delegations are aware, the draft programme of work and timetable is considered under agenda item 121. Delegations will recall that, at its eleventh meeting on 21 October (see A/C.1/74/PV.11), the Committee decided to resume its consideration of agenda item 121, “Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly” and agenda item 136, “Programme planning”. That decision was taken in view of the concerns expressed by several delegations about access to the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

While I will provide delegations an opportunity to revisit those concerns, I wish to draw the attention of Committee members to the draft programme of work for 2020 before them, which is based on the practices of the Committee in previous years. The programme of work consists of one organizational meeting — which will take place on Thursday, 1 October 2020 — eight meetings for the general debate, twelve for the thematic discussion segment and six for the action phase.

I would like to remind all delegations that the First Committee shares its conference facilities and other resources with the Fourth Committee. Consequently, the draft provisional programme of the First Committee for 2020, which we are considering now, has been prepared in consultation with the secretariat of the Fourth Committee. The two Committees will continue to coordinate their work and maintain a sequential pattern for conducting their meetings, in order to maximize shared resources.

The provisional programme of work under consideration will, of course, be finalized and issued in its final form before the First Committee starts its substantive work at its next session.

May I take it that the Committee wishes to adopt the draft provisional programme of work and timetable of the First Committee for 2020, as contained in document A/C.1/74/CRP.5?

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) *(spoke in Russian)*: I apologize for again taking the floor. I should like once again to draw the Committee’s attention to the seriousness of the situation that has emerged with

regard to the participation of national delegations in the work of the First Committee and the Disarmament Commission. Despite the opinions of certain States, we believe that the underrepresentation of certain delegations in the First Committee and the obstacles that are being created by the United States regarding the access of those delegations to United Nations events have a highly negative impact on the work of the First Committee, which has been felt by all this year.

I would like to thank those States that have expressed sympathy with Russia's position during this session and actively supported our insistence that the United States authorities change their discriminatory policies against certain States. I appeal once again to the United States to unconditionally and fully comply with the 1947 Headquarters Agreement. Only the United States, and no other Member, can comply with and implement the agreement. We note with regret that the constructive draft decision (A/C.1/74/L.57/Rev.1) that we proposed for adoption in order to resolve the issue of visas was not supported by the First Committee. Through their failure to adopt the draft decision, Committee members — here, I refer not to all States, but only to those that voted against our proposal — therefore appeared to condone the discriminatory policy of the United States.

That raises the question of whether members of our delegation will even be granted visas to participate in the work of the First Committee next year. We have no such guarantee. It is therefore difficult for the Russian delegation and a number of other delegations that fully share our position to adopt the Committee's draft programme of work for 2020, as contained in document A/C.1/74/CRP.5, under such conditions. I repeat that, due to a lack of guarantees that our delegations can be present in New York, it is extremely difficult for us to support that document.

However, as a responsible Member State that is interested in continuing to hold constructive and substantive dialogue on the current issues on the agenda within the field of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation and the author of some of the most important initiatives related to international peace and the strengthening of international security, the Russian Federation is ready to again accede to the views of the majority of States and support document A/C.1/74/CRP.5. That is our principled position. I repeat that we are once again demonstrating a very constructive position and meeting the supporters of

the draft programme half way, even though there have been no positive steps taken with regard to the issue of access by national delegations to the United Nations Headquarters to participate in various events, including the work of the First Committee. We have received no signals to that effect. In joining the traditional consensus support for next year's draft programme of work, the Russian Federation will therefore not break with the consensus. At the same time, we reserve the right to continue to raise the issue of access by national delegations to United Nations events and to United Nations Headquarters in all platforms, including those on disarmament.

Furthermore, if we do not see any changes in the discriminatory and inadmissible policy of the United States, which is in breach of the 1947 Headquarters Agreement and is violating the basic principles of the work and functioning of the universal Organization and its entities and structures, we will most definitely revisit the issue of moving future meetings of the First Committee and the Disarmament Commission to other venues and will continue to pursue this issue until it is positively resolved.

The Chair: I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for not just his statement but also his country's flexibility. I wish to say that, when we dealt with this matter at the beginning of this session, the concerns expressed by the Russian Federation and some other delegations about access to the United Nations Headquarters in New York highlighted an issue that is very important to the United Nations. All Member States must be on an equal footing and enjoy equal rights and prerogatives in terms of their participation in the Organization. That is essential and is linked to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. I want to thank the Russian Federation and all other delegations affected by the situation for their flexibility.

May I take it that the Committee wishes to adopt the draft provisional programme of work and timetable of the First Committee for 2020, as contained in document A/C.1/74/CRP.5?

It was so decided.

The Chair: The Committee has now concluded its consideration of the last item on its agenda.

Statement by the Chair

The Chair: As delegations are aware, the Committee does not usually take up the agenda item on programme planning. This year, the Committee has finished its work in the five weeks allocated to it. As members are aware, with the increased number of votes on draft resolutions and decisions this year and the high level of participation and exchange during all phases of the work of the Committee this session, we were very much behind schedule in terms of the backlog of speakers and the action on draft resolutions and decisions. However, the efficiency of the Committee ensured the conclusion of its work in a timely manner.

During the session, 132 delegations made statements within the general debate segment, while an impressive 348 interventions were made during the thematic discussion segment. During the action phase, the Committee adopted 60 draft resolutions and decisions, 40 of which were adopted by a recorded vote, with 59 separate votes requested. Nineteen draft proposals were adopted without a vote, accounting for approximately 32 per cent of all actions taken.

Before I adjourn this meeting and close the main part of the seventy-fourth session of the First Committee, I give the floor to delegations wishing to make final comments at this time.

Ms. Jáquez Huacuja (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I just wanted to briefly acknowledge your work, Sir, as Chair of the First Committee amid its difficulties. Thanks to your expertise, you chaired the Committee appropriately and very skilfully. I just wanted to put my delegation's recognition of that on the record.

Mr. Belousov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): On behalf of the Russian Federation, I would also like to express our gratitude to the Chair of the First Committee at this session, as well as to the Bureau and all staff members who have supported our ongoing and productive work. I also want to thank the interpretation service for delivering high quality interpretation of very complex statements during our thematic discussions and on topics that have not been directly linked to the agenda of the First Committee, such as the visa problem. I wish to again thank all those individuals who contributed to the successful completion of our session.

Ms. Sánchez Rodríguez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Cuban delegation would like to express

its sincere gratitude and congratulations to you, Sir, for your outstanding leadership the work of the First Committee. We also thank the members of the Bureau, the Secretariat, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the translators, interpreters and all those who have contributed to the work of the First Committee. We hope that the next Chair of the First Committee follows your approach, leadership, flexibility and constructive spirit, so that the Committee can successfully carry out its work. We also hope that, during the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly — during which we will commemorate another anniversary of the Charter of the United Nations— all the issues raised can be resolved and the host country is able to fully meet its obligations. In doing so, the First Committee will not experience the same upheaval that occurred this year at its next session and can conduct effective and efficient work.

The Chair (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to deliver a final statement in my capacity as Chair of the Committee, which I will do in Spanish, if there are no objections.

At the outset, I wish to thank each and every member for their patience, support and flexibility over the past few weeks. Chairing the work of the First Committee has been an extraordinary experience. They say that wisdom comes too late; only now do I feel equipped to chair the Committee's work, but that is a moot point. I wish to sincerely thank members, with whom it has been a real privilege to share the past few weeks. They are the *crème de la crème*, or "*la crema y nata*", as we say in Spanish, of the diplomatic world, who work in the important field of disarmament and international security. I have closely listened to their concerns and recommendations, and I have also seen how the work of the Committee is a window into what is happening in the world — it represents the challenges, adversity and dangers facing humankind.

We must face up to and address disarmament responsibly, while taking into account that one of the existential threats to humankind, alongside climate change, is the use of nuclear weapons. I understand that we are all aware of the danger facing humankind and that ours is an environment that must be nurtured and preserved, because it is the only place in which we can talk, negotiate and jointly work for the good of humankind. I therefore reiterate that it is essential that all delegations stand on an equal footing. Indeed, the Charter of the United Nations stipulates that all

States, regardless of size, should be treated equally. That is vital.

I of course also wish to thank the Secretariat for its work. Sonia Elliott and her team have been highly efficient; they have closely supported us and, in fact, represent the institutional memory that enables us to prepare and approach every detail with the utmost professionalism. Such conduct is thanks to Sonia and her team.

I also wish to thank the Office for Disarmament Affairs for its work, with special thanks to the Special Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, who has devoted a lot of time to supporting us.

I further thank the members of the Bureau, who, as the Committee has seen, have offered extraordinary and exceptional support, in particular Ambassador Amal Mudallali of Lebanon and Ambassador Honorine Bonkougou of Burkina Faso who has chaired more Committee meetings than I have. I thank Ms. Szilvia Balazs of Hungary for her support; in her capacity as Rapporteur will represent us in the meetings of the General Assembly as it considers our report. In addition, I thank Peter Horne, of Australia for his support, advice and work.

I of course also want to thank our entire team: the interpreters, translators, security staff and each and every person who makes it possible for us to meet here in conditions that surpass the financial constraints we face. They have also demonstrated the utmost professionalism. We are all aware of the current challenges. I wish to personally reiterate that this has been an extraordinary opportunity, and I feel very privileged.

(spoke in English)

I wish to ask the Committee a favour, unless, of course, there are any objections. I just want Committee members to wave and say hello as I film a video for my Twitter account, which can serve as a reminder of the intense moments that I spent with them. I had no grey hair before I began chairing the First Committee; how things have changed. I would like to hear a round of applause for all Committee members.

The main part of the seventy-fourth session of the First Committee is thus concluded. The Committee will reconvene sometime next year in order, inter alia, to elect its Chair and the other members of the Bureau for the seventy-fifth session.

Allow me to conclude my remarks by wishing all of those who are leaving New York a safe trip home.

The meeting rose at noon.