

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE THIRD MEETING
held on Wednesday, 1 May 1968, at 10.45 a.m.

Chairman:

H.I.H. Princess Ashraf PAHLAVI

Iran

APPOINTMENT OF A DRAFTING COMMITTEE UNDER RULE 47 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE

The CHAIRMAN, drawing the Committee's attention to rule 47 of the rules of procedure, said she had held informal private consultations from which it appeared that there was general support for the establishment of a drafting committee composed of five members. She expressed appreciation of the spirit or co-operation shown by the various groups and asked them to submit the names of their candidates at the earliest possible opportunity.

Mr. CASSIN (France) pointed to the need for equitable representation of the various working languages of the Conference in the drafting committee.

The CHAIRMAN hoped that the various groups would take account of the French representative's remark in submitting their nominations.

REQUESTS FOR CIRCULATION OF WRITTEN STATEMENTS BY NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS, UNDER RULE 62 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE (A/CONF.31/BUR/1).

The CHAIRMAN drew the Committee's attention to the Secretary-General's note on the matter (A/CONF.32/BUR/1) and invited the Committee to take a decision on the requests from non-governmental organizations for circulation of written statements submitted to the Conference.

Mr. CHIKVADZE (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation had just received the texts of statements by non-governmental organizations, and many had not yet been translated into Russian. He would like further time to consider them before reaching a decision about their circulation.

Mr. KHALAF (Iraq) agreed that further time was necessary to study the statements in order to ensure that they were of a general character and related to questions of human rights which were on the agenda of the Conference.

Mrs. SORIANO (Philippines) supported the non-governmental organizations' request for the circulation of their statements; her delegation was convinced of the efficacy of such civic organizations, which were a symbol of the existence of individual freedoms within a country. Non-governmental organizations in the Philippines were well-established institutions and their views were accepted as balanced and democratic and conducive to civic action. Her delegation therefore welcomed the submission of reports by non-governmental organizations and urged that they should receive serious consideration by the Conference.

Mr. POPPER (United States of America) supported the views expressed by the Philippines representative on the value of independent and flourishing non-governmental organizations in the formation of public opinion in democratic countries. It could not but be helpful to the Conference to study the statements by those organizations and he therefore hoped that the question of their circulation would be decided as soon as possible.

Mr. LUARD (United Kingdom) asked what was the normal United Nations practice in regard to the circulation of statements submitted by non-governmental organizations, and how long it would take for the Secretariat to provide a translation of those not already translated.

Mr. OULD EREBIH (Mauritania) said that the Committee was agreed in principle that the statements by non-governmental organizations should be circulated, but since it was necessary to ensure that they complied with rule 62 of the rules of procedure by being of a general character, time was required to study them. He therefore suggested that the meeting should adjourn and resume discussion of the subject later.

Mr. AWAD MOHAMED (United Arab Republic) said he could not in conscience approve the circulation of documents he had not had time to examine. From a quick glance, it appeared that some of the statements submitted had nothing to do with the subject of the Conference and others contained derogatory remarks about Member States. Two very interesting documents had been submitted: the Montreal Statement of the Assembly for Human Rights and the report of the Geneva NGO Conference on Human Rights held on 29-31 January 1968; but he could not approve circulation of the other statements without further study.

Mrs. SORIANO (Philippines) said that the Committee was not considering the approval or otherwise of the non-governmental organizations' statements, but their circulation. Her delegation believed that many useful pointers might be derived from study of the statements.

Sir Egerton RICHARDSON (Jamaica) reminded the Committee that the Conference had been convened under United Nations auspices and that the General Assembly's invitation had been issued to Member States, specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations having a special interest in human rights. If the Committee could agree to the inclusion of a completely new item in the agenda, it could surely endorse the circulation of the carefully considered views of non-governmental organizations.

In his delegation's view, the statements in question should be made available to the Conference so that it could examine them with a view to evolving principles of lasting value to the cause of human rights.

Mr. SCHREIBER (Executive Secretary of the Conference) explained that when it had been decided that non-governmental organizations could participate in the Conference under rule 62 of its rules of procedure, a large group of non-governmental organizations had wished to issue a joint report, and a number of others individual reports. The Secretariat had undertaken to translate the statements submitted, within the limit of its resources, but had not guaranteed that it would be possible to do so in every case. All but five of the shorter statements had been distributed in the working languages the previous day. In addition, there was a long report in English by the International Law Association, which it would not be possible to translate at the present stage, and a report by the Assembly for Human Rights, translations of which were being provided by the organization concerned and should arrive at any moment.

So far as normal United Nations practice was concerned, detailed provisions had been laid down by the Economic and Social Council for the submission of statements by non-governmental organizations having consultative status. Such provisions would not, however, affect any decision by the Conference, which was governed solely by rule 62 of its rules of procedure in that matter.

Mr. RESICH (Poland) moved adjournment of the debate under rule 25 of the rules of procedure until delegations had received the statements in the working languages and had had time to study them.

Mr. KHALAF (Iraq) supported the motion for adjournment, to allow delegations time to read the statements in question and ensure that they complied with rule 62 of the rules of procedure.

Mr. POPPER (United States of America) was concerned by the implications of the motion for adjournment. Would the Secretariat be able to provide translations of the statements in time for them to be circulated during the Conference? While his delegation recognized the difficulties involved, it was in favour of the circulation of views on general questions, and it would oppose the motion for adjournment of the debate if that meant that the item would be shelved indefinitely.

Mr. SCHREIER (Executive Secretary of the Conference) said that translations of the five documents he had already mentioned would be ready for circulation in the course of the day. There only remained the International Law Association's report, which could not be translated at the present stage of the Conference's deliberations, and the statement by the Assembly for Human Rights, translations of which were expected shortly.

Mr. CASSIN (France) said that his delegation was in favour of circulating the statements as soon as possible, and he therefore opposed the motion for adjournment.

Mr. OULD EREBII (Mauritania) supported the proposal for adjournment of the debate; he did not feel that the Committee could authorize circulation of the statements without having time to consider them.

The CHAIRMAN, replying to Mr. POPPER (United States of America), said that if the debate was adjourned at the present stage, another meeting of the Committee would be convened to continue consideration of the item. She put to the vote the motion for adjournment.

The motion for adjournment was rejected by 10 votes to 8, with 1 abstention.

Mr. DAPHTARY (India), Mr. CASSIN (France) and Mr. CHIKVADZE (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) reiterated the points they had made earlier, maintaining their original stand.

Mr. DAPHTARY (India) suggested that statements now available in all the working languages should be circulated immediately so that a decision might be taken on them, the decision on outstanding statements to be left until the texts were ready in all working languages. Information might perhaps be given on the status of the translation work.

Mr. KHALAF (Iraq) moved that the meeting be adjourned.

The PRESIDENT put the motion for adjournment of the meeting to the vote.

The motion was adopted by 10 votes to 9, with 1 abstention.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.