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COMMITTEE ON THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE TWO HUNDRED AND FIRST MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 28 June 1979, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. JANKOWITSCH (Austria)

Preparation for the United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful
Uses of Outer Space

Future work of the Sub-Committees

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The meeting was called to order at 11.45 a.m.

PREPARATION FOR THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE EXPLORATION AND PEACEFUL
USES OF OUTER SPACE

The CHAIRMAN: The Committee is meeting this morning to consider agenda item 6 in its capacity as the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. As members are aware, the Working Group on the Conference has in recent days held a number of meetings, under the chairmanship of the representative of India, Mr. Yash Pal, and I shall now call first on him to introduce the report of the Working Group to the Committee.

Mr. YASH PAL (India): The Working Group has held several meetings and it has, we believe, been able to accomplish a great deal of work, some of which was done by the Drafting Group which was set up under the chairmanship of the representative of Brazil, Mr. Garcia. That part of the work which, I believe, has just been finished this morning could probably be taken up directly in the Preparatory Committee, under your chairmanship, Mr. Chairman, so that there might not be any need for the Working Group to meet again.

With regard to our report, we have not yet had the opportunity to have it reproduced in the various languages in final form, but I am informed by the Secretariat that this will be done by tomorrow.

Briefly, we have a working document (A/AC.105/L.115), which was discussed yesterday. In that document, which was distributed to members, the following amendments have been made. It was agreed that we recommend that the Conference be called the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space - and so the word "Second" is now reflected in this draft.

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A/AC.105/PV.201

3-5

(Mr. Yash Pal, India)

On page 3, the important thing on which we had a great deal of discussion and finally arrived at a consensus is paragraph 18 containing the general description of the agenda. The paragraph reads as follows:

"The agenda should be broad enough to encompass all the considerations set out above and permit discussion of scientific, technical, social, economic, organizational and other relevant aspects and their interrelationship."

In the Working Group, we reached a consensus on that paragraph.

(Mr. Yash Pal, India)

On page 4, in subparagraph (b) under heading 3, after the words "Consideration of reports on the activities of the United Nations" we have added the words ", including its specialized agencies ..."; the balance of the subparagraph remains as in the earlier document.

It was decided by the Working Group, and is reflected in this document, that the paragraph which was included in the earlier documents about the final report ought to appear here. It has been included as paragraph 20 which begins:

"The Conference could prepare a report to the General Assembly on its work, which might include its recommendations on conclusions ..."

The language is taken from what had already been agreed to and appeared in earlier reports of the Committee.

On page 5, it is made clear that, as in earlier documents, the dates mentioned here are only applicable on the assumption that the Conference will be held in the second half of 1982. Those dates could be amended, when we agree on the date on which the Conference ought to be held.

The square brackets that we had introduced on page 6 of the draft in the first paragraph have been removed, because there has been a consensus on the Bureau of the Conference which appears on page 6 of document A/AC.105/L.115.

Subparagraph (k) has been added at the top of page 6 and reads:

"The specialized agencies of the United Nations should be invited to make appropriate contributions to the preparation of papers and studies referred to under B (1) (c)."

Under the section entitled "Form of the Conference", we have a paragraph that was agreed to and there is another paragraph which was at the bottom of the agenda section in the report of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee, but which the Working Group decided would be more appropriate in this section. That paragraph begins:

"The review of programmes, presentation of national/international programmes, results of scientific experiments, etc., should not consume ..."

(Mr. Yash Pal, India)

Next there should be a paragraph under "Ceiling for cost of the Conference". This was discussed by the Drafting Group a while ago, and I suppose that a paper on it will be presented a little later directly to the Chairman.

We then have a very important paragraph at the end on procedure on which there was a consensus. It reads:

"It is proposed that best endeavours be made to ensure that the work of the Conference and the adoption of its final report are accomplished by general agreement."

I should say at this point that we have two additional paragraphs that were submitted by a number of representatives to be included in the part preceding the statement of specific items on the agenda. Those paragraphs have been reproduced in document A/AC.105/L.115/Add.1.

That, then, is the work that we have accomplished with great co-operation, a great deal of thought and many inventive suggestions from all representatives and with special assistance from the Chairman of the Drafting Group and the Drafting Group itself which worked in a very clever and supportive way in order to reach this stage.

We do not yet have a specific recommendation on the date and venue. We held discussions yesterday afternoon on the question of the date. I do not believe that we had time to arrive at a formal consensus.

If I may for a moment speak as the representative of India, my general impression is that 1982 is a date that should be favoured. We favour it and it appears that several other delegations would also do so. But we did not formally propose that and ask for a consensus at that time, so I cannot as Chairman of the Working Group say that we arrived at a consensus in 1982.

I am sorry that we did not get to discuss the question of venue. Much consultation took place; we rose at 6.15 p.m. yesterday. Speaking again for my delegation, we hope that it will be possible to arrive at a solution on that, bearing in mind the fact that we could of course hold the Conference at Headquarters, but clearly we have a very good invitation still open to us.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank the Chairman of the Working Group on the Conference for his report and express the Committee's gratitude to him and the other members of the Working Group for the work accomplished and for the constructive spirit of compromise that prevailed throughout its work.

I call on the Chairman of the Drafting Group who will now kindly supplement the information provided by the representative of India concerning questions of a financial nature.

Mr. GARCIA (Brazil): The Drafting Group worked this morning until a few minutes ago and was able to prepare a list of assumptions on which the Secretariat will do the budgeting. That paper is now in the hands of the Committee Secretary for typing and distribution to the members of this Committee.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank the Chairman of the Drafting Group for the additional information which reflects another area in which agreement has been reached among delegations, namely, the area of financial implications for the Conference.

I shall now call on representatives who wish to make comments on the reports from the Working Group and the Drafting Group to enable us to wind up the Committee's work in its capacity as the Preparatory Committee for the Conference as rapidly as we had envisaged.

Mr. KOSTOV (Bulgaria)(interpretation from Russian): First of all, we should like to thank the Chairman of the Working Group, the representative of India, Mr. Yash Pal, and the Chairman of the Drafting Group, Mr. Carlos Moreira Garcia of Brazil, for their persistent work on one of the important agenda items for this session, namely, the holding of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

(Mr. Kostov, Bulgaria)

The positions of States that have been set forth in the plenary Committee and in the working groups testify to the fact that, although significant progress has been achieved in solving questions related to the holding of the Conference, none the less there are a number of questions that are yet unresolved - for example, the questions of venue and length of the Conference, its financial costs, the form of the final document and so forth. It is hardly necessary to emphasize that all these questions can be settled on the basis of reasonable compromise in light of the just requirements of States.

In regard to the length of the Conference, our delegation holds with the States which insisted that the Conference should not last more than two weeks. Experience gained in holding conferences of this kind shows that that would be a fully sufficient time, provided that there is good organization and that all the necessary facilities and material base are available for bringing about the optimal solution of the problems facing that Conference. Moreover, we must take into account the considerations expressed here with regard to the work-load of the participants, the over-burdened international calendar and the financial costs involved.

With respect to the venue and the date of the Conference, my delegation, as it has already stated, firmly supports the Soviet Union's proposal - namely, to hold the Conference in Moscow in August 1982. The fact that one of the Powers most advanced in the conquest of outer space is proposing to act as host to the Conference constitutes, in our view, a sufficient guarantee of the success of the Conference, and we should all be grateful for that proposal. What is more, knowing well the situation in the city of Moscow and the ability of the competent Soviet bodies to organize such meetings, and knowing their hospitality and readiness to share their experience, my delegation has further grounds for being certain the results arrived at that Conference would indeed be outstanding.

Speaking frankly, we do not understand the situation in which this Committee finds itself with regard to this question. The Soviet Union - the first to explore and to conquer outer space and which has prepared the groundwork for outer space research - has issued an official invitation to us to hold the Conference in Moscow. It would seem that members of the Committee should pay due respect

(Mr. Kostov, Bulgaria)

to such an invitation, especially since there are no other official invitations in this regard. I should like representatives to think about this situation. The Soviet delegation is, in my opinion, entitled to wonder what considerations are hidden behind the reluctance of some delegations with regard to the matter of accepting that invitation. The international community of course expects that the Soviet Union, like other States which have had tremendous success in the conquest of outer space, should share its experience with other States, and that could no doubt best be done if the Conference were held in one of those countries. I personally have no doubt that in Moscow we would have all the conditions necessary for holding this Conference at the highest professional level.

We welcome the achievement of agreement in the Working Group on the election of the President, the Vice-President and the Rapporteur General for this Conference in the light of the need to guarantee representation of all regional groups comprised by the United Nations. We think that, in accordance with established practice, the post of President should be held by the representative of the country that is acting as host to the Conference.

During discussions, considerations were expressed concerning the nature of the Conference. We think that the nature of the Conference is defined by the goals set for it and by the questions that it must take up. Thus, the Conference should be scientific and technical in nature and not diplomatic - not forgetting, of course, that it will be held under the aegis of the United Nations. It should focus its efforts on the application of space science and technology, bearing in mind the needs of all countries, especially those of the developing countries.

Finally, we should like once again to confirm our readiness to meet halfway all constructive proposals for the purpose of providing the best possible preparation for the Conference and obtaining the optimum results from it.

Mr. RYCHLEWSKI (Poland) (interpretation from Russian): Our delegation with great satisfaction concurs with the gratitude expressed to the Chairmen of the Working Group and of the Drafting Group who prepared the work that we are considering today. We express the hope that the questions that remain may be resolved in a spirit of compromise; our delegation will display a flexible attitude in this regard.

(Mr. Rychlewski, Poland)

Allow me to make one small comment that is purely formal in nature. Our delegation listened attentively to the part of the discussion that dealt with the financial side of the question of the Conference. We share the views expressed concerning the need to adopt a very careful attitude towards the calculation of costs. We have today received a working document on the financial implications of the Conference. It is a valuable document that substantially enriches our understanding of this subject. But there is one annoying lacuna. In the introductory part of the text it is stated that the document gives various possibilities relating to the duration of the Conference, its venue and the number of languages required.

With regard to the length of the Conference and the languages required, the document does indeed deal with the different possibilities that were studied in this Committee. Unfortunately, that is not the case with regard to the venue of the Conference. As we understand it, only one invitation has been made at these meetings, and it came from the Government of the Soviet Union to hold the Conference in Moscow. Acceptance of that invitation has been supported by a number of delegations, including my own, and there have been statements indicating that other delegations have a flexible position on the question. But that is not reflected in the document, though there were no other proposals made. For the sake of clarity I would say that we are not in favour of excluding from this document other possibilities that could be considered in the light of resolution 31/140 of the General Assembly. But we should like this document to be supplemented by the inclusion of a city that is not a headquarters of the United Nations: Moscow. It would be advisable to reissue this document and to have it include that supplementary information. That is necessary primarily for purely formal reasons in order to reflect what has taken place in this Committee.

At the same time, the question also has its financial aspects. As we understand it, from the viewpoint of the United Nations, this alternative of another city, Moscow, is apparently not more expensive than New York. A host country takes the costs upon itself. Therefore I propose that this working document - and I understand it is a working document - be reissued and that it contain additional information reflecting what has actually taken place in this Committee.

The CHAIRMAN: I am sure that it will be quite easy to meet the request of the representative of Poland.

Mr. MANNIG (German Democratic Republic): My delegation shares the opinion that the Working Group on the Conference has made remarkable progress, especially at its meeting yesterday, so a great number of problems have been settled. My delegation welcomes this progress.

In connexion with the venue, my delegation would like to thank the delegation of the USSR for its invitation to hold the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space in Moscow in 1982. I think it is not necessary to remind representatives that the Soviet Union was the first country to send a Sputnik and, later on, the first cosmonaut, into space. That means the Soviet Union has great experience in this field. I think this Committee should honour those successes by accepting the Soviet invitation.

Furthermore, no other country has declared its readiness to be the host of the Conference. Therefore, my delegation holds the view that our Committee should decide to hold the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space in Moscow in 1982.

Proceeding from the great experience of the Soviet Union in the field of research work in outer space, my delegation is convinced that Moscow would, as the venue of the Conference, offer the best possibilities and conditions for fruitful work and a successful outcome of that very important international conference.

The CHAIRMAN: As there are no further comments on the reports of Mr. Yash Pal and Mr. Garcia the Committee is now approaching the conclusion of its work as the Preparatory Committee for the Conference. In the course of this preparatory work we have, as representatives here have stated on numerous occasions, made great progress in the preparations for the Conference, and a large area of consensus has emerged and is reflected in the papers that the Working Group on the Conference has put before the Committee this morning.

The Committee has thus to a great extent fulfilled the mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly. Concerning the issues that have been, and indeed

(The Chairman)

still are, before the Committee, it appears that the area of consensus can be further supplemented by a definite decision on the date of the Conference, and the representative of India has mentioned that it is his feeling -- and it is my feeling too -- that the Committee could agree that the Conference should be held in 1982.

It is a matter of regret for all of us, I am sure, that in another important area of the Committee's preparatory functions we do not yet seem to be able to come to an agreement and that the Committee might have to expend further common efforts in a constructive spirit, keeping in mind all the proposals that have been made on this issue of the venue. However, it seems to be the command of political wisdom that for the time being we not recommend a specific venue to the General Assembly but ask the Assembly to allow us to come up with a recommendation in this regard next year.

I believe that with a recommendation of this nature concerning the preparation of the Conference, we might, while not fully implementing the commands of the Assembly, still come up with a large number of constructive proposals and then be able next year completely to fulfil the mandate the Assembly has given this Committee.

If this tentative summing-up meets with the agreement of the Committee, I believe we can conclude our consideration of agenda item 6 in our capacity as Preparatory Committee for the Conference.

It was so decided.

Mr. KOLOSSOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (interpretation from Russian): The Chairman of the Working Group, Mr. Yash Pal, has mentioned that almost at the very end of the meeting of the Working Group there was issued an addendum to the Working Group's document, which the Group said would be printed and distributed. I should like to ask Mr. Yash Pal when that addendum will be distributed, whether this Committee will discuss it, and how it will be adopted.

Mr. YASH PAL (India): I had thought that the document had been distributed already. The document contains two paragraphs which were submitted yesterday by the representatives of Indonesia, Pakistan and Romania. They read as follows:

"The Conference should contribute towards the orderly growth of space activities favourable to socio-economic advancements of mankind and in particular to the peoples of the developing countries through the creation and reinforcement of national capacities.

"The Conference should also stimulate and enhance the co-ordinating role of the United Nations which is eminently suited to bring about increased international co-operation and assistance to the developing countries to achieve the optimum results."

Since we did not discuss these paragraphs properly after they were circulated yesterday, perhaps the Chairman of the Committee could give members the opportunity to make corrections either at this stage or when we are adopting the report?

The CHAIRMAN: I think we should present apologies to all delegations which have not so far seen these two paragraphs in writing. One possibility, of course, would be, as the representative of India mentioned, to consider these paragraphs at the appropriate time, when we are considering the report. In any case the Committee will have to make an appropriate decision, whatever comments and reflections are made in this regard.

FUTURE WORK OF THE SUB-COMMITTEES

The CHAIRMAN: Yesterday under agenda item 7 a working paper, document A/AC.105/L.114 was introduced by the representative of France. That working paper and any other matters pertaining to the future work of the Sub-Committees are now before the Committee and I invite members' comments and

(The Chairman)

suggestions in this regard. There are no other working papers or documents before the Committee under this item.

Mr. RICHER (France) (interpretation from French): I do not want to make any additional comments concerning this document but I should simply like to say that the document was not submitted by France alone, even though that is what is indicated on this paper. It is co-sponsored by the delegations of the Netherlands, Egypt and the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mr. CHAMBERLAIN (United Kingdom): I should like first of all to express the gratitude of the United Kingdom for the proposal presented by France and co-sponsored by a number of other delegations and to say that my delegation will support the proposals contained in this paper. It seems to my delegation that the proposals contain several useful features. In the first place, the suggestion that the general debate should be confined to the plenary meeting of the Outer Space Committee itself is a very useful one. My delegation has been very conscious of the fact that under the present system we have three sessions, all of which are preceded by a general debate and we think that this does tend to waste a certain amount of the time of the Committee and its Sub-Committees and we consider that there is perhaps some merit in ensuring that the general debate takes place only in the main Committee.

The second feature which my delegation finds useful is the proposal to have the affairs of the Legal Sub-Committee and the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee more closely co-ordinated. There have been several cases in the past in which such co-ordination has been lacking, particularly for example in the field of remote sensing. Therefore, my delegation feels that it would be a useful step forward to ensure that there is closer co-ordination between the work of the two Sub-Committees.

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A/AC.105/PV.201
23-25

(Mr. Chamberlain, United Kingdom)

Finally, my delegation notes that the proposal of the French delegation is that this new procedure should be followed for an experimental period. That should perhaps calm the fears of delegations which feel that a departure from the present practice may be a step in the dark - if I may use that expression. If we find after the year's experiment that it has not been useful we can always go back to the existing system.

Mr. YASH PAL (India): My delegation welcomes this effort, this very valuable suggestion, which has been put forward by France and several other delegations. However, we have a few remarks on it, one worry and one suggestion.

(Mr. Yash Pal, India)

The suggestion is that we should ensure that there is a gap of about three or four months between the meetings of the Sub-Committees and those of the main Committee so that it would be possible for the main Committee to have all the reports and sufficient time for thinking, in order to be able to discuss them. For example, if the Sub-Committees were to meet in February, then the main Committee should meet, as it does now, in the month of June.

My worry is something to which probably the Secretariat can address itself. If we have the two Sub-Committees meeting simultaneously, the Secretariat will have to service both Sub-Committees. There would also possibly be working groups. For example, the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee certainly would be meeting in a working group, perhaps as the Advisory Committee for the Conference. There might also be a nuclear power sources working group. I wonder whether, with all those bodies working simultaneously, this would pose any problems for the Secretariat. If the Secretariat sees no problems, then clearly we have no problems.

Mr. KOLOSSOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (interpretation from Russian): Our delegation has attentively studied the proposal submitted by the delegation of France, which is also sponsored, as we have just learned, by three other delegations. Our delegation would like to express its gratitude to the French delegation and the other delegations for their efforts in contributing to yet greater efficiency in the work of our Committee and its two Sub-Committees. We also have some doubts with respect to taking such a decision now at this session, and we should like to share these doubts with the delegations present here.

It seems to us that reducing the number of meetings of specialists in the area of international co-operation in the peaceful exploration and use of outer space within the United Nations from three to two per year would hardly be useful in terms of progress in the organization of international co-operation and further solution of problems in this field. As is known, a number of delegations have strict instructions at those sessions and the fact that those delegations have

(Mr. Kolossov, USSR)

the opportunity to meet three times a year, and thus the opportunity to renew their instructions three times a year in the search for compromise solutions, seems to us, to be a favourable factor.

With regard to the insufficient co-ordination between the activities of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee and the Legal Sub-Committee, it seems to us that we might take a different road: we might take the road of firmer and more specific guidelines which our Committee could draft for its two Sub-Committees. Apparently our Committee should think about this and perhaps at the next session we could have a special discussion of this question. We could include it as an item of the agenda, namely, the role of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space in the matter of co-ordination between its Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee and its Legal Sub-Committee.

With respect to the problem of the opportunity for consultations between specialists in the area of space technology and jurists, political experts and specialists in other areas, it seems to us that holding simultaneous sessions of the two Sub-Committees in the same place would be insufficient to solve that particular problem. We know that in the history of the Committee's work, instances have occurred when we needed special working groups. Such working groups were established to discuss the questions of direct television broadcasting, remote sensing of the earth and navigational matters. It seems to us that the method of setting up special working groups on these questions when necessary, groups which are open to technical as well as legal specialists - in a number of instances it was also found useful to have sociologists and economists participating, as in the case of the Working Group on direct television broadcasting - the method of having specialists in different disciplines work jointly, would be more effective and allows us to include in such working groups not only technical people or legal people, but also specialists in other disciplines. Furthermore, there is nothing to prevent States from forming their delegations in such a way that they can have technical specialists at the sessions of the Legal Sub-Committee as well as legal specialists at the sessions of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee. Our delegation,

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A/AC.105/PV.201
28-30

(Mr. Kolossov, USSR)

as everyone knows full well, does that. Therefore, we have no difficulty in that regard.

In conclusion, we should like to say that it will be difficult for us to take a final decision on the proposal submitted by France and the other sponsors. What I have just said constitutes our preliminary set of considerations. The proposal is very interesting. It is a very serious proposal. If we take a decision in that sense, even on an experimental basis for one year, very serious consequences might result, serious consequences not only in terms of procedure but also in terms of the substantive issues of the problems being discussed. It seems to us that delegations should take this proposal with them to their countries and carefully study its possible consequences. They should closely examine whether this procedure would hasten our work and would lead to greater chances of achieving consensus or whether it would have the opposite result and lead to a lessening of our chances of reaching consensus.

(Mr. Kolossov, USSR)

Might this not introduce an element of confusion into our work? Therefore, we propose that we take note of this document, and the interested delegations could come back to this proposal at the next session of the Committee.

In connexion with the proposal for this experimental programme, we should like now to return formally within the framework of this agenda item to the question of another experiment which we already mentioned earlier. As is known, we had this year on a trial basis the agenda of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space drafted in a different way from previous sessions, that is, there was a specific sequence in which all substantive questions were laid out, questions which were being discussed in the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee and the Legal Sub-Committee. We have not heard the opinions of other delegations, what they think of this experiment, whether or not it was successful. But in our delegation's opinion this experiment has not improved our work over that of earlier sessions of the Committee. It has not facilitated discussion; it has not facilitated the achievement of consensus on a number of questions.

Therefore, our delegation will not be able at this session to support a decision whereby this experiment would be considered successful and whereby we would continue to draft the agenda of the Committee for subsequent sessions in keeping with the experiment we have just conducted. We shall recommend that this experiment remain nothing but an experiment.

Mr. HOSENBALL (United States of America): I have listened with interest to the various statements made by delegations on the working paper submitted by France, which is apparently supported by other delegations.

This is not a new issue. If memory serves me right, last year the same question as to the co-ordination of work between the Scientific and Technical Committee and the Legal Sub-Committee was raised. I am not certain, but I believe that it had been raised in earlier years as well. It is a modest proposal and, as indicated, labelled experimental, and we should experiment - some experiments work, some do not.

(Mr. Hosenball, United States)

The comments made by the representative of the Soviet Union with respect to the agenda are probably very well taken. But this Committee has experimented before. In years gone by we have had the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee meet after the Legal Sub-Committee, and then we reversed it and went back to the system of having the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee meet before the Legal Sub-Committee.

If we do not take a decision this year and postpone it again for another year and do not conduct the experiment, my delegation and I are not convinced that it will work. The representative of the Soviet Union has raised some concerns which, I believe, are fully legitimate, for example, concerning the impact on the composition of delegations. None the less, it is still a modest proposal. What it basically does is to eliminate two weeks of general debate.

With the growth of the Committee to its present 47 members and the very substantial interest of delegations with regard to the agenda, we spent a full week in the Legal Sub-Committee devoted to a general debate. I did not attend the session of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee this year, but I imagine that quite some time was spent in general debate. We also spend a full week in general debate in the plenary Committee, and I suspect that if one were to read the statements in the general debate one would find them repetitive in a great many respects.

So, while I admit that this is a serious step and that it requires consideration, we should consider it seriously at this session. It is an experiment, and my delegation believes that it is worth trying, reserving judgement after the conduct of the experiment on whether or not it should be continued.

Mr. RICHIER (France) (interpretation from French): I have listened with great attention to all the comments made by the representative of the Soviet Union with regard to our proposal, which is supported by a number of other countries.

I understand that his delegation requires time to reflect and take a position on this proposal. But I should like to help in this thinking process by making some comments about his observations.

The argument set out at the beginning of the statement of the representative of the Soviet Union on the question of going from three to two committees did not seem to me to be consonant with what we intended. We never asked that the two Sub-Committees be merged. We asked that the two Sub-Committees meet during a certain period of time in the same place, so as to ensure that there be some co-ordination between them. Therefore, our proposal does not at all aim at going from three to two committees but retains the plenary Committee and the two Sub-Committees.

With regard to the co-ordination which we hope to achieve by this proposal, it would perhaps not be ideal, and the Soviet Union delegation has even said that it might not suffice. Undoubtedly, it will not suffice. But, then, what is the Soviet delegation thinking about when it says this? Does it have another proposal that would make it possible to improve ours, or a brand new proposal, which we would be ready to consider? As one delegation recalled, this problem of co-ordination is indeed an old one - in this Committee and in the history of all committees it has existed for hundreds of years.

I should like to recall in this connexion that the Secretary-General of our Organization is deeply concerned with this problem and that he has, in a Working Group which he convened, asked that an effort be made. That is what we wanted to do, and I think that the problem of working groups that was raised in this connexion is a rather different problem.

With regard to the role of the Committee in connexion with its Sub-Committees, well, I think that it is obvious that the Committee is responsible for its Sub-Committees; it is responsible for their work and, hence, for their working methods and, particularly, for co-ordination between them. That is why I should like once again to ask some delegations which still entertain doubts please to demonstrate a scientific spirit and allow the experiment. The delegation of France, just like other delegations, is not sure of its success.

(Mr. Richer, France)

There are two other points on which I should like to speak. With reference to the general debate, I share the opinion of the United States delegation. Indeed, I believe that to be very important that we decide that the Committee should not organize a general debate on the various items. That would save a week's work in each Sub-Committee. That would represent a very great improvement in their working methods.

Finally, with regard to the working methods of this Committee - I must admit that my experience in this regard is rather limited, since this is the first time that I have participated in its work - I believe that the analytical method which has been adopted is perfectly logical. It has made it possible for the Committee over the past three weeks not to have to repeat the same things over and over again nor to examine a matter in its legal aspect on one day and in its scientific aspect some days later. This method has obviously been quite successful. The work has been done speedily. That is doubtless not the only reason, but this working method has no defect and I do not see any reason for abandoning it.

Mr. KESTEREN (Netherlands): It is not only the delegations that joined in sponsoring document A/AC.105/L.114 which have expressed concern during the general debate about the Committee's working methods; many others also have done so. It is the impression of my delegation that there is a general feeling that something should be done about our working methods. It is certainly possible to hold a lengthy discussion about the ideal solutions for the problems that we face in this regard, but in our view it is more important to take concrete steps at this juncture to solve the problems with which so many delegations are concerned.

The approach reflected in document A/AC.105/L.114 is, in our view, a very moderate one, a very careful step and, moreover, meant to be an experimental one. In the view of my delegation, which has joined in sponsoring this document, there is ample reason to give it a try. We urge other delegations to think about the possibility of putting this experiment into practice as soon as possible.

Mr. DE LA PEDRAJA (Mexico) (interpretation from Spanish):

My delegation sincerely thanks the delegation of France and the other sponsors for their efforts to find a system that would make it possible for our work in this Committee and the Sub-Committees to be more flexible and, as a consequence, for us to make more speedy progress in the discharge of our duties. Although I am aware of the good intentions behind this initiative, I almost fully concur in the statement made by the delegation of the Soviet Union concerning the advisability of maintaining our present system of meetings, at least for the time being.

I believe that, apart from the fact that having three separate sessions during the year provides a very useful means for each delegation to verify its instructions and change them if necessary, it also provides an opportunity to think about some of the aspects on which progress could more easily be made in consideration of the items.

In this connexion, my delegation believes - and I believe this is a problem that other delegations will recognize - that if there were simultaneous meetings of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee and the Legal Sub-Committee, as well as of related working groups, it would be impossible for delegations such as mine to attend all those meetings.

With reference to co-ordination of the work of the two Sub-Committees, I think that one of the many reasons why such co-ordination exists between them is the fact that delegations have wished to avoid a discussion in one Sub-Committee of items allocated to the other Sub-Committee. On this point, my delegation has proposed that each Sub-Committee be empowered to discuss items allocated to the other. Perhaps if the main Committee were to decide to draft a single agenda for both Sub-Committees we could solve to some degree the problem of co-ordination.

Mr. DAYRELL DE LIMA (Brazil) (interpretation from French): Although several objections have been raised to the French proposal, my delegation believes that the French proposal as submitted presents us with no difficulties. Indeed, we believe that the working methods in the Committee and in the two Sub-Committees would benefit from the measure proposed by the delegation of France.

(Mr. Dayrell de Lima, Brazil)

However, if the Committee does not accept the proposal in its entirety, even on an experimental basis, there are nevertheless aspects that could be considered. I am thinking particularly of the elimination of the general debate from sessions of the two Sub-Committees. That would make available a substantial amount of time that now is spent each year in the two Sub-Committees on a general debate that should more appropriately take place in the main Committee.

Reference has been made to the new way of drafting our agenda. In this regard my delegation is particularly pleased at the method adopted this year and believes that an analytical agenda should be prepared in future, as was done this year.

Mr. MEHMUD (Pakistan): We have listened with great interest to the views expressed by the representatives of the Soviet Union and the United States of America. My delegation feels that holding the sessions of the two Sub-Committees concurrently or with an overlap, may not solve all the problems, because it may become necessary for some Governments to have the reports of those Sub-Committees before them to consider them at length. So, again, there may be an argument in favour of staggering the work of the two Sub-Committees to enable Governments to take a closer look at final subtleties of certain details. There are arguments that could be advanced both for and against, and perhaps we may not be able to resolve this issue.

As an interim solution, may I suggest that the two Sub-Committees be asked to consider directly the agenda items allocated to them, without a general debate. That could perhaps be an acceptable solution for the delegations here.

Mr. CHAMBERLAIN (United Kingdom): My delegation has listened with great interest to the doubts expressed by the representatives of the Soviet Union, Mexico and other States as to the French proposal, but I wonder whether we could not at least reflect on one element in it on which we might be able to reach agreement - an element that was mentioned by the representatives of Pakistan and Brazil - namely, the question of dispensing in the Sub-Committees with a general debate and confining it to the main Committee. I think that at least this element of the French proposal could commend itself to the Committee.

Mr. VERESHCHETIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (interpretation from Russian): It seems to us that the considerations expressed by a number of delegations, in particular the delegation of Pakistan and supported by the delegation of the United Kingdom, deserve attention. However, it would serve no purpose for our Committee to take such a definite decision and make such a recommendation to its two Sub-Committees. It seems to us that the rules of procedure of the Sub-Committees and the competency vested in them and in their Chairmen would allow them, in cases where it was necessary, to resolve the question at each particular session whether to hold a general debate, on what item and for how long.

If right now we issue such strict guidelines to the Sub-Committees, not to have a general debate, then situations may arise when, on some newly introduced item, it would be absolutely necessary to have an exchange of views in a general debate, with a record of them; but, for a purely formal reason - because our Committee had taken a firm decision - that would turn out to be impossible. Therefore, we feel that it would be quite sufficient to say in our report that a number of delegations expressed concern over the fact that there were repetitions in the general debates of the Committee and its Sub-Committees with regard to certain items and that the opinion was expressed that debates in the Committee and its Sub-Committees should not duplicate one another and that the Committee recommended to its Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee and Legal Sub-Committee that, in specific instances, they consider at each session the question of the need to hold a general debate and, if no necessity existed, that such general debates not be held.

Mr. RICHER (France) (interpretation from French): When the representative of the Soviet Union asked to speak, I had the hope that with regard to this question of a general debate he was going to agree that it could be omitted at the Sub-Committee level. It seems that that still poses a problem to that delegation. I must say that among ourselves we are fully aware of what a general debate is and that that is not the concern of the Soviet Union. The representative of the Soviet Union has told us that if there is a specific subject that is to be debated then it must be debated.

To be sure, the Sub-Committees must be able to debate all items, but, if I am not mistaken, there is on their agenda an item called "Other matters" that makes it possible for discussion to be held on any particular matter. We all know that in an assembly having as many participants as this one has the general debate consists of a series of statements that are termed a debate but that are not truly one. The Sub-Committees have the means of conducting a debate through their agenda, and I truly believe that it would help them and save them time, perhaps not if we radically eliminated the concept of a general debate but if we formulated a recommendation that would be tantamount to that and that would say that, except when necessary and so forth, the general debate would be omitted. I propose a formula of that kind.

The CHAIRMAN: I believe that we have had a good and thorough discussion of this important aspect. I hope that as we approach consideration of our report -- and this item will come up fairly late in that consideration -- we can hold further consultations so as to reconcile points of view, and that we may eventually reflect our common feeling in the report to the General Assembly.

I believe that this winds up our consideration of agenda item 7. I suggest that this afternoon we start our consideration of agenda item 8, "Other matters". This will, I hope, not take long, and we could then proceed to consider the draft report, portions of which are ready and available to delegations. This would enable us to proceed smoothly and quickly and keep within the schedule that we have set for ourselves.

Mr. DAYRELL DE LIMA (Brazil): I should just like to have a point clarified. As I understand it, Mr. Chairman, you are going to close our consideration of agenda item 7, which deals with the future work of the Sub-Committees. Are we going to deal with the question of the allocation of priorities for items or are we not?

The CHAIRMAN: The representative of Brazil is, of course, free to bring this matter up under agenda item 7. It can also be dealt with in our consideration of the report, which has usually been the time when we dealt with it. If the Committee so wishes, we can devote some part of the afternoon to a further consideration of agenda item 7, but it would be my preference to take up this matter under agenda item 9. Therefore, if the Committee is agreeable, we have concluded our consideration of agenda item 7. We shall start this afternoon with agenda item 8 and then proceed immediately to consider the draft report. I would, of course, remind members that any question that is outstanding on any agenda item can be brought up when we discuss the report.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.