



# General Assembly

Seventy-eighth session

## First Committee

**10**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Thursday, 12 October 2023, 3 p.m.  
New York

Official Records

Chair: Mr. Paulauskas . . . . . (Lithuania)

*The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.*

### Agenda items 120 and 135

#### Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly

##### Programme planning

**The Chair:** In connection with the two items on the agenda of today's meeting, I would draw the attention of the First Committee to a note by the Secretariat contained in document A/C.1/78/INF/4, which highlights relevant provisions of resolution 77/335, on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, and resolution 77/254, on programme planning.

In accordance with paragraph 11 of resolution 77/254,

“whenever the Committee for Programme and Coordination cannot provide conclusions and recommendations on a given subprogramme or programme of the proposed programme budget, the plenary or the relevant Main Committee or Main Committees of the General Assembly responsible for those mandates will consider the said subprogramme or programme at the very start of its session in order to provide any conclusions and recommendations to the Fifth Committee, at the earliest opportunity, and no later than four weeks after the start of the session, for timely consideration by the Fifth Committee”.

In paragraph 105 of its report issued as document A/78/16, the Committee for Programme and Coordination recommended that the Assembly, at its

seventy-eighth session, review the programme plan for programme 3, Disarmament, under the agenda item entitled “Programme planning”. Today's meeting is in response to that mandate.

Following today's debate, I intend to submit a Chair's summary of the discussions on the Disarmament programme to the Chair of the Fifth Committee. Similarly, based on feedback from the delegations, I will, as Chair, summarize the key points raised by Committee members on the working methods of the Committee for onward transmission to the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly.

Before giving the floor to the first speaker, I would remind the delegations that statements made in a national capacity are to be limited to five minutes, while statements made on behalf of a group of States are limited to seven minutes.

**Mr. Eustathiou de los Santos** (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): With regard to working methods, my delegation would like to acknowledge the efforts of the Secretariat and its role in organizing the meetings and activities of the First Committee. Its support is critical for our ongoing activities, as is the hard work of interpreters and all the Secretariat staff who assist us on a daily basis. We are also grateful to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs for updating its database, which is so valuable for new representatives and for those of us who need to consult documents from previous meetings.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room AB-0928 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).



It is very important to my delegation that we consider multilingualism to be a guiding principle in the work of the First Committee. As an organization composed of a multiplicity of nations with different languages, the United Nations reflects our multicultural variety. Accordingly, and so that the tasks can be carried out efficiently, we must respect the official languages of the Organization in our daily work. In particular, we reaffirm that, in meetings, relevant interpretation should be provided, and that draft resolutions as well as documents submitted by the Secretariat should be promptly translated into all official languages of the Organization.

Beyond multilingualism, we urge members, in arranging the Committee's deliberations, to consider the reality of the situation of small and medium-sized missions. The economic restrictions on developing countries do not allow them to dispose of the unlimited human resources needed to fully meet the growing agenda of the United Nations. We would therefore be grateful if the duplication of activities could be avoided, particularly for the sake of those delegations that have only one representative to cover each — or even more than one — Committee.

My delegation expresses its concern about the downward trend in the number of draft resolutions adopted by consensus in the work of the First Committee. We encourage dialogue, mutual understanding and active exchange among delegations to reach consensus on the draft resolutions we consider. To that end, we believe it essential to have more time to engage in more in-depth discussions to reach the widest possible consensus.

We are also concerned about the increase in the number of draft resolutions that address the same or very similar topics. We ask that the facilitators, working in a spirit of multilateralism and balance, seek agreements to present single texts on similar topics and to consider the positions of all members.

Finally, in order to manage the already limited time we have for our discussions more efficiently, we ask that statements respect the agreed time limits, with a more assiduous use of the mechanism of transmitting statements in extenso to the Secretariat for publication on the United Nations website, which would undoubtedly provide greater fluidity in debates.

**The Chair:** I thank the representative of Uruguay for his statement. I also thank him for serving as a

member of the Bureau and for helping us to improve the working methods from within the Bureau.

**Ms. Della-Porta (Australia):** I speak on behalf of Canada, New Zealand and my country, Australia (CANZ). I thank the Chair for convening today's discussion on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly and on programme planning.

In accordance with resolutions 76/236 and 77/254, CANZ is not represented on the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC), and we regret that, at its June session, that body once again failed to provide recommendations on a large number of programme plans. These plans without CPC recommendations include programme 3, Disarmament.

CANZ supports the important work of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and thanks it for its work in preparing the programme plan. We recall that the mandates covered in this programme have already been agreed. We further recall that our discussions are not meant to relitigate or duplicate the work of the CPC and regret that consensus in that moribund committee could again not be found despite the General Assembly's call for it to provide recommendations on all 28 programme plans.

United Nations programme planning is and should remain a consensus-based exercise, and the Fifth Committee is responsible for overseeing the implementation of mandates. As such, the Fifth Committee has the final responsibility for adopting the programme plan and the programme budget.

CANZ continues to support the crucial work of the UNODA, and we ask that the Chair recommend to the Chair of the Fifth Committee that the General Assembly approve the programme plan for programme 3, Disarmament, as proposed by the Secretary-General, without modification.

**Mrs. Romero López (Cuba):** I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the delegations of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Nicaragua, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the Syrian Arab Republic and my own country, Cuba. We appreciate the convening of this debate.

We recall that the working methods used during the period of the coronavirus disease pandemic to maintain the work of the General Assembly were of an exceptional nature and did not set a precedent for the future. We advocate the General Assembly, its Main

Committees and subsidiary bodies resuming in-person work, especially for negotiations and decision-making. The mandates and functions of the General Assembly and its Main Committees must be respected. The rules of procedure of the Assembly should continue to guide our work. Revitalizing or streamlining the work should not lead to a reinterpretation of the existing mandates and rules. Member States must unconditionally retain the sovereign right to introduce new items and/or submit new draft resolutions under the agenda of the General Assembly and its Main Committees, as they deem appropriate.

With regard to programme planning, we support the fact that the First Committee's programme of work provides sufficient time for discussion of these agenda items. We believe that it is incumbent upon the Main Committees to deal substantively with those programmes and subprogrammes of the proposed programme and budget that have been left without specific conclusions and recommendations from the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC). This is the case with programme 3, Disarmament.

We cannot support initiating substantive discussion on disarmament in the Fifth Committee or introducing language to that effect. As the substantive committee on disarmament matters, the First Committee needs to assess whether the content of this programme accurately reflects the mandates it has conceived. We emphasize the need, when considering the disarmament programme, to give due attention to the meetings of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and to the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, so that the necessary assistance and services are provided in accordance with the mandates created or promoted by the Committee.

We hope that the turbulence at the conclusion of the CPC session last year will not affect the programmes supported by the non-nuclear-weapon States and developing countries. Accordingly, we appreciate the management by and constructive support of the Secretariat, and we will help programme managers in the Organization have an accurate and adequate guide so they can carry out their work as expeditiously as possible.

**Mrs. González López** (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): The full text of this statement will be submitted to the Secretariat.

We appreciate the convening of this timely debate on the revitalization of the General Assembly and its working methods and on the issue of programme planning.

With regard to the revitalization of the General Assembly, in particular the First Committee and its working methods, I would like to emphasize that El Salvador recognizes the sovereign right of all States members of the General Assembly to submit draft resolutions for the consideration of all Assembly members and, if appropriate, for the adoption of those drafts. However, El Salvador notes that at this and previous sessions of the First Committee, draft resolutions have been submitted on topics of great relevance to general and complete disarmament and international security, but which have greater similarities than differences and appear to be in competition with one another. This proliferation of draft resolutions poses a challenge for small delegations such as mine, overburdening us with follow-up in negotiations of draft resolutions on the same themes. This situation is exacerbated when these resolutions give rise to General Assembly mandates that create subsidiary bodies that also require follow-up, often in parallel.

The foregoing increases the heavy workload of the First Committee and the General Assembly. Furthermore, it prevents the active involvement of some delegations, particularly small ones. This naturally generates results that lack inclusiveness and do not take into consideration the needs and priorities of the vast majority of the membership, not for lack of interest, but for the lack of conditions that ensure the equal participation of all member States.

In that regard, my delegation wishes to make an earnest appeal to the countries proposing draft resolutions along similar major thematic lines to make greater efforts to coordinate and be flexible so that the draft resolutions the First Committee considers do not compete with each other, and so that the Committee's processes are ones in which all States can contribute constructively and which generate single follow-up mechanisms.

Furthermore, I would like to draw attention to the mandate set forth in resolution 77/335, whereby the General Assembly and its Committees at each session

must formulate specific proposals for considering items on the Assembly's agenda every two or three years, namely, the biennialization or triennialization of agenda items, or group some items together and eliminate others. In this regard, my delegation expresses its confidence that the President of the General Assembly, as well as the Bureau of the First Committee, will carry out this mandate with the firm support and will of all of us, the member States, but also, and most importantly, of the States proposing the draft resolutions that are taken up in this Committee.

In conclusion, we believe that the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly and the discussion of its working methods is a process that deserves continued attention. We therefore hope that the practice of convening substantive dialogue on working methods will be maintained in future sessions of the First Committee.

With regard to programme planning, my country recognizes the decisive role played by the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) in the review and approval of the programme budget, and we regret that out of the 28 programmes this year, 10 did not receive the required conclusions and recommendations. The disarmament programme is one of a short list of programmes for which, in the four most recent sessions of the First Committee, no consensus for conclusions and recommendations was found.

While my delegation recognizes the important mandate given to the General Assembly and its Main Committees in resolution 77/254, we reaffirm the need for the CPC to be strengthened. It should be recalled that the mandate given was for use in the rare event that the CPC was unable to formulate such recommendations, yet we find ourselves in that situation once again. The CPC therefore needs to be strengthened. My delegation is very concerned about this scenario and has no major objection to the adoption of the programme by means of the summary that the First Committee Chair would present to the Fifth Committee.

**Mr. Sánchez Kiesslich** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by thanking the Secretariat for the arrangements made so that delegations can use Conference Room 12 for informal consultations. We hope that this arrangement will now be standard for the First Committee.

As to the schedule of informal consultations, we appreciate the Secretariat's continuous updating and

the fact that the meetings have been scheduled in an orderly manner and without parallel negotiations. However, some virtual consultations did overlap with face-to-face consultations. We recommend that the schedule of future informal consultations also show virtual consultations.

With regard to the member States, Mexico once again expresses its great concern about the new practice of the submission of competing draft resolutions wherein their authors have no intention of negotiating. We already encountered this situation when we considered cybersecurity processes, and it is now being repeated for processes involving outer space. Even more worrisome is the possible establishment of parallel processes that would have a financial impact on the United Nations and prevent the effective and equal participation of all delegations. We call for this practice not to be normalized and for a return to unitary resolutions and single processes.

We also wish to raise awareness and express deep concern about the implications of certain draft resolutions that seek to alter the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. I refer in this regard to cases where the rules of procedure would apply to certain issues and the misuse of the consensus to others, or where the consensus is used but with the condition that future positions are not be prejudiced by agreements reached.

In addition to strongly urging delegations to desist from these dangerous practices, we also expect the Secretariat to act in a timely manner to provide the technical and legal guidance that a situation deserves. We hope that the Office of Legal Affairs will speak out on the matter, given that, if such formulations succeed, they may have implications for the entire functioning of the General Assembly. Since there is already a practice of circulating budget and programmatic implications for consideration by member States, we would like to see something similar for issues relating to possible impacts on the rules of procedure.

We have noted a growing trend in the United Nations to giving greater importance to hierarchical rank than to the actual participation of countries. In other bodies we have even seen restrictions being placed on the participation of individuals not at the ambassadorial level. We believe that the United Nations is composed of States and that the hierarchical level of representation is irrelevant to the positions of our countries. Obviously, adjustments for protocol are necessary — and we

welcome high-level officials — but whoever occupies the seat of a member State in this conference room is the voice of his or her country, no matter what rank the representative holds.

In the First Committee, we deal with priority issues of international security. Let us concentrate on substance. As a member of the General Assembly, my country attaches the greatest importance to participation on an equal footing, and we hope that the modalities agreed for the time allotted for statements will be respected.

We would also like to draw attention to the fact that in 2022 we experienced an unfortunate situation with regard to interpretation services. At a crucial time when action was being taken on draft resolutions, these services were no longer available. We urge the Secretariat to make all necessary provisions to ensure that the action-taking phase will not be affected by the unavailability of interpretation services. This is something that is easily foreseeable, and we are confident that this year and in future sessions there will be no such impacts.

This year the e-deleGATE platform again experienced technical glitches, which affected the registration of delegations in the lists of speakers in the thematic debates; this was not the first time that that had happened. We hope that it will not continue to occur in the years to come.

My full statement will be uploaded to the e-deleGATE Portal for consultation by delegations.

**Ms. Storsve** (United States of America): We are grateful for today's discussion and the work of the Secretariat to prepare it.

My comments pertain to programme planning. The United States is disappointed that the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) was unable to provide conclusions and recommendations for 10 programme plans during its sixty-third session. Paragraph 11 of resolution 77/254 states that plans that do not receive conclusions and recommendations from the CPC will be considered by the plenary or the relevant Main Committee or Committees of the General Assembly responsible for those mandates in order to provide any conclusions and recommendations to the Fifth Committee for timely consideration.

We believe there are two important things to note. First, the plenary or the relevant Main Committee

may provide any conclusions or recommendations to the Fifth Committee, which also means that they may provide no conclusions or recommendations to the Fifth Committee. It is really up to the Chair and the membership of each Committee to make that decision.

Secondly, ultimate authority on these matters still lies in the Fifth Committee, with its responsibility for administrative and budgetary matters. Regardless of the outcome in the plenary or other Main Committees, those programme plans will be considered by the Fifth Committee as a final step.

The CPC is a consensus-based body, and the Fifth Committee is a consensus-based body by tradition. Any conclusions and recommendations provided by other Committees must be decided by consensus. Attempts to move forward on these matters without consensus would undermine the CPC, the Fifth Committee and the entire planning process. As evidenced by the CPC, deliberations on the plans in question are long and politically sensitive, meaning that this would take a great deal of valuable time away from the already crowded programme of work of the plenary and the Main Committees. We therefore ask for support in swiftly moving these programme plans to the Fifth Committee so that it may continue with its work, with the understanding that it is the Chairs of the Main Committees who dictate the path forward for their Committees' work.

**Ms. Semon** (France) (*spoke in French*): With regard to the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, I would first like to express support for the requests made by the representatives of Uruguay and Mexico with respect to multilingualism and interpretation in our meetings. I would also like to thank the Chair for his efforts to ensure that our debates run smoothly, particularly by making certain that the time limits for statements and rights of reply allocated to States are respected. I believe that this is absolutely critical to guaranteeing the quality of our exchanges.

As Committee members know, France is committed to ensuring that this forum, in which all States Members of the United Nations participate, enables realistic progress in the field of disarmament. It is in this spirit that we are approaching the work presented to us this year. We make a direct contribution by regularly submitting draft resolutions, and this year, we are submitting a new draft resolution on the cyber programme of action.

For each of the draft texts we submit, we intentionally work in full respect for multilateralism. That is why we always seek to work constructively with all the member States of the General Assembly and gather the broadest possible support for our drafts, while ensuring that there is no duplication across different forums. We are fully aware of the weight that the workload can impose upon the smallest delegations.

With regard to programme planning, like others, we are grateful for the Chair's involvement, but regret that today's debate in the First Committee is an additional burden, given our already heavy programme, and risks diverting attention from the core of our work. We believe that this discussion should not duplicate or replace that of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC), as that would weaken the CPC's important role in future.

Programme planning is intended to help improve plans. It is not intended to call into question the work of the CPC, still less to reopen for discussion the content of the mandates that underpin the plans. These mandates have already been approved, and the plans are merely the faithful expression of these mandates. In future, it is important for the CPC to reach a consensus on all 28 programme plans. We therefore regret that a consensus has not been reached for several years on a programme as important as that for the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs.

Planning is a consensus-based exercise. The Fifth Committee is charged with overseeing the implementation of mandates. As such, that Committee is ultimately responsible for adopting the plan and the budget. In essence, in the end, the plan for programme 3, Disarmament, reflects the mandates given by the Member States. We therefore support this plan and would like the Chair, acting on behalf of the First Committee, to recommend to the Fifth Committee that the General Assembly approve the plan as proposed by the Secretary-General.

**Mr. Vorontsov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Allow me to present Russia's approach to organizing the work of the First Committee of the General Assembly and that of the specialized expert structures established by General Assembly resolutions.

Meetings in that format should be held in accordance with established practice, exclusively in person; remote or hybrid meetings are not acceptable. The functioning of groups of experts must be carried out on the basis of

the principle of consensus to ensure that the views of all Member States are taken into account. An important issue is the participation of non-State actors. We proceed from the fact that its parameters must fully comply with the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and established practice. It must be carried out without prejudice to the interstate nature of the group and of the General Assembly as a whole.

Non-State entities that have been granted observer status at the General Assembly, as well as other stakeholders approved by Member States under the no-objection procedure, will be able to attend formal meetings, make oral statements in the dedicated informal segment for non-State actors, and make written contributions, which will be published. All speeches and documents of non-governmental bodies must comply with the agenda of the First Committee and relevant groups of experts created by resolutions of the General Assembly.

Interested parties should approach the work responsibly and in a politically neutral fashion. Equitable geographical representation and participating non-State actor diversity are important principles to be upheld. That remains a serious issue. Following those principles will allow us to ensure efficiency and avoid problems in the future activities of the First Committee.

Another obstacle to ongoing dialogue between States Members of the United Nations is the bad-faith implementation by the Host Country of its obligation to issue visas to all delegations intending to participate in meetings at the United Nations. This practice is unacceptable, as it is in gross violation of the international legal obligations of the United States under the 1947 United Nations Headquarters Agreement. That is directly related to the First Committee. We do not intend to overlook this irresponsible conduct by the American authorities. We once again call for the immediate commencement of an arbitration procedure on the host country of the United Nations Headquarters.

Yet another flagrant violation by the United States has been its failure to grant visas to members of our delegation intending to go to meetings, including the meeting of the "nuclear five" that Russia, as a coordinator, was organizing at the margins of the First Committee. We view those actions by the United States to be directly and deliberately aimed at undermining the Russian presidency and that international forum.

We thank the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs for supporting the implementation of the decisions of the Security Council and General Assembly. This assistance should be unbiased, unpoliticized and fair-minded, and it should strictly comply with mandates agreed by the member States.

We have similar requirements for the draft work programme. The Russian Federation presented a proposal to modify the document. We will not read out those recommendations again right now. In our view, under the current conditions, the best option would be to do as we have traditionally done in the past, namely,

*(spoke in English)*

to approve, on an exceptional basis and without creating a precedent for programme 3 of the proposed programme budget for 2024, a programme narrative that is composed solely of the list of mandates at the programme level and the objectives approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 71/6 and the deliverables for 2024 at the subprogramme level.

**Mr. Liddle** (United Kingdom): I thank the Chair for convening today's meeting on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly and programme planning, in accordance with resolutions 76/236 and 77/254.

While we welcome the opportunity to discuss these matters, we should emphasize that they should not detract from the busy workload of substantive matters of disarmament and international security already shouldered by the First Committee and be clear that this meeting does not set any precedent for how this Committee approaches the matter of programme planning in future. My delegation would like to reiterate that we consider the Committee for Programme and Coordination to be the best place to review the proposed programme plan and provide technical conclusions and recommendations thereon. Today's discussion must not be allowed to undermine the role of the Committee for Programme and Coordination by duplicating or relitigating its work.

The Committee for Programme and Coordination plays an important technical advisory role in the General Assembly's review of the United Nations programme budget. We regret that it has once again been unable to provide any conclusions or recommendations to the General Assembly on this programme. We reiterate our call on the Committee for Programme and

Coordination to redouble its efforts to reach consensus on all programmes next year.

The mandates covered in this programme have been agreed. The First Committee is being asked to review the proposed programme plan and to check that activities proposed by the Secretary-General are in line with these agreed mandates. It is not to reinterpret or reopen those mandates through what should be a technical review process. As has been set out in General Assembly resolutions, and in line with the regulations and rules, it remains the role of the Fifth Committee to endorse these programme plans.

Turning to the programme itself, we are grateful to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs for preparing programme 3, Disarmament. The United Kingdom supports the crucial work of the Office for Disarmament Affairs, not least in supporting preparations for the eleventh Review Conference of Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and other crucial disarmament and arms-control processes. We welcome in particular the continued effort of the programme to reinforce the norm against chemical weapons, including by supporting full implementation of such international instruments such as the Chemical Weapons Convention. Maintaining levels of technical expertise, preparedness and resourcing is key for the delivery of this programme.

The United Kingdom welcomes the strong language throughout the programme on gender equality and the participation of women in the work of this programme. We are also pleased to see that an evaluation of the Office's outreach initiative, Youth for Disarmament, in support of resolution 76/45 on youth, disarmament and non-proliferation, is planned for 2024.

In conclusion, the United Kingdom asks that the Chair recommend to the Fifth Committee in any communication he may have with it on behalf of the First Committee, that the General Assembly approve the programme plan for programme 3 as proposed by the Secretary-General, without modification.

**Ms. Chan Valverde** (Costa Rica) *(spoke in Spanish)*: Costa Rica welcomes today's meeting to discuss opportunities to improve the working methods of the First Committee, framed within the debates we hold on the revitalization of the General Assembly and programme planning.

My delegation regrets that since 2017 the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) has not been able to provide recommendations to the General Assembly on the disarmament agenda. In practice, this means that, despite the discussions in the First Committee and the mandates we agreed on, the programme executed by the Secretariat remains frozen in time.

Costa Rica is a member of the CPC and was proactive in presenting concrete language proposals on gender perspective and a special reference to the Second Meeting of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We call on all States to ensure that this Committee expeditiously reviews the programme under its purview and provides the General Assembly with the necessary programmatic guidance.

Costa Rica wishes to revive some of the guidelines set forth in resolution 77/335 on the revitalization of the Assembly, recently adopted by consensus, and therefore calls upon proponents of resolutions that incorporate only technical changes two, three or four years in a row, to consider submitting their resolutions every two or three years.

Secondly, we should focus on the trend towards generating multiple resolutions on similar topics, which has sometimes resulted in the establishment of parallel processes on the same issues. We call on delegations to eschew proposals that generate duplication, by using dialogue, which is the best tool for building agreement.

Thirdly, we call for more time to be devoted to substantive discussions and for greater opportunity to negotiate resolutions.

We also call for ensuring the full, equitable and meaningful participation of women both in the plenary of the First Committee and in the draft texts being negotiated. While we recognize an increase in the participation of women in the Committee, there is still an unfortunate resistance to achieving inclusion or to relying on disaggregated data, which hinder our efforts to overcome gender blindness and the composition and leadership of delegations on peace and security issues.

With the foregoing in mind, Costa Rica proposes that the draft programme of work and timetable that we prepare for 2024 dedicate the first week of the First Committee session to informal consultations, with a single formal opening meeting, and that we continue with the general debate beginning in the second

week. This would allow more time to be devoted to substantive discussions and contribute to improved dialogue among delegations.

The recent winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics, Claudia Goldin, has highlighted the persistence of gender inequalities in labour markets, noting that

“[t]here are still large differences between women and men in terms of what they do ... [women] have become workers, they have begun earning a living for themselves and for their families. Their lives have greatly changed, but the labour market and the policies of Governments are often slower to respond.”

The way we conduct our First Committee work is a reflection of this reality, which ignores the importance of work-life balance. Let us take the opportunity to rethink the working methods of this Committee, not only to be more effective but also to improve our working conditions.

**Mr. Vidal (Chile)** (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful for this opportunity to discuss the working methods of the First Committee, which is a very important issue for our delegation because of its value in improving our work. It is essential that the results of today's debate be communicated to the Chair of the Fifth Committee so that the relevant administrative and financial safeguards are put in place, as these are indispensable for the implementation of some of the resolutions and/or decisions that we adopt.

We regret that the Committee for Programme and Coordination, a subsidiary body of the General Assembly, has not been able to reach consensus on recommendations for 10 programmes, including disarmament. The work of the First Committee is particularly relevant today in the light of the current difficult international security environment. We must therefore be rigorous in maintaining our focus on disarmament matters.

In this regard, we request that we avoid duplication of content in draft texts and that we have more time to debate draft resolutions. That implies not having parallel submissions. We also note that some of the resolutions that we adopt annually have, from year to year, only minimal changes, in some cases only numerical references, such as date and number of the resolution approved in the previous session.



**Mr. Thöni** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): We regret that the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) was unable to agree on conclusions and recommendations with regard to the disarmament programme plan. Having said that, we would have preferred the First Committee not to be called upon to decide on the adequacy of this programme plan, when the underlying mandates, we would recall, have already been approved. That is the approach that prevailed in recent years, and we wish to maintain it.

While our Committee may decide to carry out the task not accomplished this year by the CPC and review the disarmament programme plan, it is under no obligation to do so. In any case, according to the regulations and rules governing programme planning, the role of adopting these plans falls not to the First Committee but to the Fifth Committee. Our current discussion is therefore a duplication of the work of the Fifth Committee, which will deal with programme plans as part of the adoption of the 2024 budget. It would therefore be preferable for this Committee to concentrate on its already busy work programme and the related substantial elements.

Allow me to express Switzerland's full satisfaction with the draft programme plan for disarmament. Switzerland thanks the Secretary-General for this submission and recommends that the Fifth Committee approve it without modification.

Allow me also to address the issue of our Committee's working methods. It seems appropriate that we examine how the Committee can be made more efficient and how the workload can be better balanced. We welcome the proposals made by some delegations in this regard. I would like to highlight four aspects.

First, our Committee currently deals with some 70 resolutions. While it is to be welcomed that the First Committee is covering an increasingly considerable number of topics and new security challenges, it is also worth noting that over the years many resolutions barely evolve, and in some cases are only subject to technical changes. The effectiveness of our Committee could be enhanced if more resolutions, particularly those of a static nature, were presented only once every two or even three years.

Secondly, it must be said that some topics dealt with by our Committee are the subject of several, sometimes competing, resolutions that establish parallel processes. This can be problematic in terms of the efficiency and

resource availability of the Secretariat and member States. The processes established by these resolutions can also lead to growing polarization. In our view, wherever possible, multiple resolutions on the same topics should be avoided. More generally, this situation illustrates the fact that the positions of delegations are increasingly divergent on a number of issues, and that efforts to achieve convergence are needed.

Thirdly, another way of improving efficiency would be to more rationally manage the time set aside for debates. If an increasing number of States wish to express their views during the general and thematic debates, then we should consider further reducing the time set aside for each speaker.

Finally, we welcome the fact that an appropriately sized room has been assigned to the First Committee this year for consultations on draft resolutions. While this development imposes certain constraints — notably, shorter consultations, with some being held relatively late — it is nevertheless a step forward compared with the prevailing situation in recent years. We hope that this will continue in future.

**Ms. Quintero Correa** (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Secretariat for submitting the documents on the working methods of the First Committee and programme planning. We regret that the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) did not make recommendations on 10 programmes, including programme 3, Disarmament. In the light of this situation, my delegation would like to refer to the report of the CPC (A/78/16), and specifically to the document listed in the report's annex, namely, "Proposed programme budget for 2024, Part II: Political affairs, Section 4, Disarmament, Programme 3, Subprogramme 3, Conventional Weapons" (A/78/6, Section 4).

In this regard, we would like to thank the Secretariat for the preparatory work carried out to implement the mandate of paragraph 23 of resolution 77/71, namely,

"to establish, within the regular budget of the United Nations, a standing dedicated fellowship training programme on small arms and light weapons in order to strengthen the technical and practical knowledge and expertise of government officials directly responsible for the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument, particularly in developing countries, to be implemented annually starting in 2024 for a duration of four weeks in-person in four regions,

respectively, preceded by a preparatory self-paced online course, with the participation of 15 fellows per region”.

We stress the importance of the Secretariat having the tools and means necessary to implement the standing dedicated fellowship training programme, and we thank all delegations for their efforts in this regard.

**Mr. Kusano** (Japan): My delegation appreciates today’s discussion in application of resolution 77/254 and will remain committed to engaging positively and constructively in achieving the best possible outcome for all of us.

While we believe that it is indeed within the purview of each Committee to decide whether or how to take up the programme planning in our programme of work, we need to remind ourselves that, as evidenced by the work of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC), which dedicates its five-week sessions solely to programme plan discussions, deliberations on these plans are long and politically sensitive processes, meaning that focusing on them would take a great deal of valuable time away from the already crowded programme of work of the First Committee. In this

regard, it is important that our discussion does not duplicate the work of the CPC.

It is also important to point out that the Fifth Committee is the appropriate Main Committee of the General Assembly entrusted with responsibilities for administrative and budgetary matters and, as such, is responsible for approving the final programme plans and programme budget. We therefore believe that it is in our best interests to swiftly move these programme plans to the Fifth Committee so that it may continue its work, with the understanding that the Chairs of the Main Committees dedicate themselves to the paths forward in their work.

**The Chair:** We have heard the last speaker on the list for this meeting. While every member of the Bureau has taken notes, having listened attentively to the statements made, I would add that I too have gathered a number of recommendations from this meeting for my summary report. Committee members may rest assured that this summary will be transmitted to the Chair of the Fifth Committee.

*The meeting rose at 3.55 p.m.*