

Statement by
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Chairman of the Second Committee of the 69th Session of the General Assembly

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Ab Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly

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Co Chairs, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to update delegations on the working methods of the Second Committee. Revitalizing the General Assembly means strengthening the legitimacy of the whole UN system, as the General Assembly is the widest reflection of the will of the international community.

I would like to start by sharing a few considerations based on my experience as Chair of the Second Committee of the 69th session of the UNGA. I will conclude by mentioning some proposals, across the board, on which we have been working together with the other Committees' Chairs. These proposals have been reflected in a letter we sent to the PGA, in our individual capacities as Chairs, together with an aide-memoire.

I. Views from the 2nd Committee of the 69th UNGA

The 2nd Committee of the 69th UNGA held 38 formal meetings, one informal meeting and 270 informal "informal" consultations involving more than 30 facilitators. A total of 39 draft resolutions and one draft decision were adopted. Eight resolutions were adopted by recorded votes. The 2C also continued its tradition of holding joint meetings with the ECOSOC and organizing side events that promote discussion on issues before the Committee of interest to the Member States.

Over the last years, as you know, the Second Committee undertook significant steps towards improving its working methods. In implementing the request contained in General Assembly resolution 68/307 on the revitalization of the work of the Assembly, the current Bureau of the Second Committee decided to allocate time to exchange ideas on the working methods of the Committee. This resulted in a formal meeting at the beginning of the session and an informal meeting towards the end of the session.

I will mention some proposals for the future that emerged out of our discussions and some good practices that we were able to implement.

As observed by some Member States, the future Bureau may wish to consider **dispensing with the practice of having a general debate and start its work straight with the consideration of**

individual agenda items. General discussions of agenda items can be lengthy and often duplicative of what has already been said during the general debate.

Some delegations highlighted that information on possible **cost implications of draft resolutions** should be made available in due time in order to make the best informed decision during negotiations. More generally, **clear guidelines should be provided to facilitators and negotiators on how to address questions concerning the programme budget implications (PBI) of draft resolutions in a manner that does not encroach on the mandate of the 5 Committee.** My colleagues on the Bureau and I arranged for the Director of the Budget Division and members of his team to meet with us and the Second Committee facilitators regarding the overall question of programme budget implications.

As you know, it is the practice that the Bureau of the Second Committee considers the draft programme presented to it by the Secretariat and then approves it for circulation. In this connection, the current Bureau established, on the suggestion of the previous Bureau, **deadlines for the submission of draft resolutions that should take into account the complexities of some draft proposals to be negotiated.**

Also on the suggestion of the outgoing Bureau, the current Bureau established a **clear procedure to be followed for requesting an extension of the deadline for the submission of draft proposals.** Many Member States have stressed the important role of the Bureau and facilitators in enforcing as strict an adherence as possible to the established deadlines. Some have suggested that draft resolutions for which “informal” consultations could not be concluded by the deadline set by the Bureau should be transmitted to the following session of the General Assembly or submitted directly in the General Assembly plenary when the negotiations are completed.

The practice of placing draft proposals **on silence procedure**, which was used in the past in cases where capitals had to be consulted prior to final agreement on negotiations, has become “institutionalized” as a mode of operation. Such practice has significantly slowed down the process of presenting the draft resolutions to the Secretariat for processing. Indeed such **procedure should be applied to very few cases on an exceptional basis.**

As to the broader conduct of the Committee, **I held a meeting with the Chairs of the five regional groups and the Chairs of major groups in early November to discuss the programme of work of the Committee for the remaining weeks.** This was the first time that the Chair of the Second Committee hosted such a meeting and it was welcomed by the various groups. The future Chairs and the other Bureaux members of the Committee may want to follow up on this initiative and consult with Member States and the regional groups as well as major groups on the programme of work of the Committee in advance of the issuance of the programme.

Looking towards the near future, it will be key for the Chair and other members of the Bureau of the Second Committee for the seventieth session, in cooperation with the President of the General Assembly, the Chair and the Bureau of the Third Committee, the President and other Bureau

members of the Economic and Social Council, to **request the Secretary-General to propose ways to rationalize the agendas of the Second Committee, Third Committee and ECOSOC in order to eliminate duplication and overlap.** This will be all the more necessary in view of the follow up to the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and the September 2015 Summit. This is a call that the General Assembly has made most recently in resolution 68/1.

In order to maximize synergies and increase coherence and effectiveness, a thorough **review of the agenda items** of the Second and Third Committees and ECOSOC should be undertaken by Member States, in collaboration with the Secretariat, taking into account views expressed by major groups.

Finally, as I said, together with the other Chairs of Main Committees we sent, in our individual capacities, a **letter to the PGA that conveys in a condensed manner and with a cross-cutting perspective the lessons we have drawn from our experiences** as to the ways of improving the working methods of the Main Committees. I will briefly illustrate the conclusions we wished to share with the PGA.

II. Across the board view

Despite specific arrangements in their governance structure, the Committees of the General Assembly face similar problems when it comes to working methods. The central challenge is to make the best use of the Committees' allocated time, so as to avoid the need for extensions, and to devote it to issues truly relevant to the membership avoiding duplication of efforts. The conclusion we achieved in our individual capacities as current Chairs of the main Committees is that there is indeed scope for improvements. Many of them do not require huge overhauls of the existing normative framework.

Such issues have already been addressed in relevant Resolutions on "working methods" adopted by the GA. It is therefore of the essence that delegations assure the full and consistent implementation of such provisions and strengthen best practices which are already emerging.

With this in mind, the following are suggestions that can be addressed both to the Chairs of the Committees and Bureau members, and also to the distinguished delegations.

General Suggestions

1. Bureau elections could be brought forward to April to allow sufficient time for preparation for the incoming Bureaus.
2. Possible joint current and incoming Bureau meetings could promote fruitful exchanges ahead of the beginning of the next session. Such meetings could be foreseen in late April/May.

3. Possible establishment of an informal coordination mechanism between the PGA and the Chairs of the Main Committees to ensure real-time coordination and consistency across the board.

More in detail

- After their election and ahead of the commencement of their work, Chairs of the Committees and Bureau members should consult with Member States on the program of work of the Committees, including possible new proposals for resolutions as well as on ways to improve coherence and effectiveness and maximize synergies.
- If not existing, Chairs of the Committees and Bureau members should issue guidelines on the conduct of work of the Committees in the upcoming session, reflecting existing best practices and lessons learned from previous sessions.
- While fully respecting the mandate of the 5th Committee over budget issues, Chairs of the Committees and Bureau members should ensure that the Secretariat makes available, in a timely fashion, basic information on possible cost implications of draft resolutions and decisions.
- Deadlines. While fully respecting the Chair's role and peculiarity of each Committee, delegations should fully comply with the rules of procedure, duly respecting the mandatory deadlines for the submission of draft resolutions and be fully aware that submissions after the expiration of draft deadlines will not normally be accepted, unless a different agreement is reached prior to the beginning of the session.
- Delegations should make an effort to reduce the number of resolutions presented by, for example, opting to biennialize or triennialize their introduction. Resolutions tabled should be concise, focused and action-oriented.
- There should be full respect for established time limits when statements are being delivered during the general debate: for example, 7 minutes for individual Member States and 10 minutes for delegations speaking on behalf of a group of States, unless differently agreed. In this regard, delegations with relatively long statements should be requested to deliver a concise oral summary of their text and submit the full statement in written form for posting on the Committee's web portal.
- Informal consultations. For those issues that require more time, delegations should be given the possibility to engage in informal consultations before the official presentation of the relevant agenda item before the Committee.
- Lastly, mindful of the need to ensure an adequate gender balance in all the appointments within the UN System, a greater participation of women as Chairs of the General Assembly Main Committees deserves to be encouraged.

Thank you for your attention.