
SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 2nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. PIRSON (Belgium)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and
Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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Distr. GENERAL
A/C.5/34/SR.2
27 September 1979
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

OPENING STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

1. The CHAIRMAN said that the work of the Fifth Committee was now under way. He welcomed the admission of Saint Lucia to the membership of the United Nations. He thanked the Committee for the honour it had bestowed on the Group of Western European and Other States, on his country and on himself by electing him Chairman. He regarded the office as a means of rendering service to the membership as a whole, and hoped that the Committee's decisions and recommendations would be motivated by the common good. During the current budget year the Committee would have not only to apportion funds according to needs and to distribute the burden of expenses equitably among the States but also to see to it that its recommendations concerning the international civil service were just, particularly with regard to personnel questions and pension problems. The success of the Committee's work would depend on its members' willingness to co-operate, their readiness to compromise, and their acceptance of the organizational measures recently adopted by the General Assembly.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

2. Miss MUCK (Austria) nominated Mr. Abraszewski (Poland) for the office of Vice-Chairman.

3. Mr. Abraszewski (Poland) was elected Vice-Chairman by acclamation.

4. Mr. RAMZY (Egypt) nominated Mr. Buj-Flores (Mexico) for the office of Vice-Chairman.

5. Mr. Buj-Flores (Mexico) was elected Vice-Chairman by acclamation.

6. Mr. HAMZAH (Syrian Arab Republic) nominated Mr. Khamis (Algeria) for the office of Rapporteur.

7. Mr. Khamis (Algeria) was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK (A/C.5/34/8; A/C.5/34/L.1)

8. The CHAIRMAN pointed out that in document A/C.5/34/8 the President of the General Assembly drew the Committee's attention to the decisions, listed in section II of document A/34/250, which the General Assembly had taken regarding the organization of work. Concerning the schedule of meetings mentioned in paragraph 3 of document A/34/250, he expected meetings to begin promptly at 10.30 a.m. and 3 p.m. At the thirty-third session of the General Assembly, the Fifth Committee had been cited as an example to be followed by the other Main Committees. It had lost the equivalent of only one meeting, having begun its work on schedule at most of its meetings. Bearing in mind the General Assembly's new recommendations, the Committee should be able to do even better at the thirty-fourth session, with the full co-operation of every delegation and the Secretariat staff.

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(The Chairman)

9. Paragraphs 12 and 13 of document A/34/250 contained recommendations approved by the General Assembly on budgetary and financial questions. In paragraph 13 (b), the General Assembly recommended that the Fifth Committee should "as a general practice, consider accepting without debate the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on the financial implications of draft resolutions up to a prescribed limit, namely, \$25,000 on any one item". Moreover, paragraph 13 (a) would set a mandatory deadline - not later than 1 December - for the submission by the other Main Committees to the Fifth Committee of all draft resolutions with financial implications.

10. The recommendations contained in paragraphs 14 and 15, on the submission of reports to the General Assembly, were in keeping with the practice of the Fifth Committee, which, at preceding sessions, had decided that its reports would be as concise as possible, and, save in exceptional cases, would not contain a summary of the debates.

11. He suggested that the Committee should confirm the following traditional arrangements: (a) the list of speakers for each main agenda item would be closed 48 hours before the item was taken up; (b) the speakers would make their statements in the order in which they were listed; (c) the Rapporteur would report directly to the General Assembly on all questions for which there was no summary of debates.

12. The Secretariat would be asked to issue by the beginning of the following week a list of all the documents that would be submitted to the Committee by the Secretary-General or by United Nations bodies. On the basis of that list, the Committee would perhaps wish to draw up, by a suitable date - 1 November, for example - the final list of documents that could be submitted to it at the current session.

13. He invited the Committee to take note of document A/C.5/34/L.1 containing the tentative weekly programme of work, which had been drawn up with the availability of documents in mind. In that respect, it had to be admitted that the situation was disastrous. The proposed programme budget had been circulated only the preceding week, together with the first report of the Advisory Committee, notwithstanding regulation 3.4 of the Financial Regulations, which stipulated that budget estimates should be transmitted to Member States at least five weeks prior to the opening of the regular session of the General Assembly. Under the circumstances, it would not be reasonable to ask delegations to discuss the proposed programme budget immediately, even in the context of the general debate. That was why the first items proposed for discussion were the report of the Committee on Contributions and the financial reports and accounts. The general debate was tentatively scheduled to begin on 3 October and would continue until 15 October, after which date delegations should be ready to consider the proposed programme budget section by section.

14. Mr. MAJOLI (Italy) observed that paragraph 14 of document A/C.5/34/8 stated that the General Assembly had decided that items 17 (g) to (i) would be considered directly in plenary meeting. He asked why those subitems had, so to speak, been withdrawn from the Committee's consideration and referred to the General Assembly.

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15. The CHAIRMAN, answering the question of the representative of Italy, explained that he himself had brought up the matter with the Secretary of the General Committee, who had confirmed that it was traditional for the members of the Joint Inspection Unit to be appointed directly by the General Assembly at a plenary meeting.
16. Mr. PICO DE COAÑA (Spain) said that once again the question of the organization of the Committee's work made it necessary to raise the problem of the availability of documents. Of course one had to face the situation and proceed, but it was also important to stress the fact that documentation continued to be prepared late, with extremely regrettable consequences.
17. Regarding the General Committee's recommendation to the General Assembly that the Fifth Committee should accept without debate the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on the financial implications of draft resolutions up to \$25,000, his delegation wondered if that particular figure was appropriate. It therefore reserved the right to return to the matter at a later stage, although it supported that technical recommendation in principle.
18. Mr. PALAMARCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that recent experience had enabled the Committee to improve to some extent the organization of its work, which, because it was so complex, required sustained attention and a concentration of effort on the different objectives to be attained. In that connexion, it was appropriate to bear in mind the unhappy lesson which members of the Committee were, unfortunately, obliged to draw with regard to documentation. The question was admittedly difficult and complex; that was precisely why the Committee should give it some thought forthwith and envisage the possibility of setting a time-limit for the consideration of documentation. At the previous session the Committee had decided to postpone until the following session its consideration of all documents submitted after 25 November; he wondered whether the Committee might consider taking a similar decision with regard to the current session. As had been the case previously, such a time-limit would not apply to the consideration of the financial implications of draft resolutions adopted by other Committees or to the budget performance report.
19. The CHAIRMAN said that documentation for the current session was indeed proving to be a serious problem. He himself had registered a protest in the General Committee of the General Assembly, in particular with regard to the late submission of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1980-1981. The question was also causing major concern at the highest level of the Secretariat, namely, for the Secretary-General himself. At the first luncheon given by the President of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General had made a special statement on that subject and had promised that every effort would be made during the current session to make available all documentation, and in particular Fifth Committee documentation, as early as possible. However, experience had shown that the Committee was generally confronted with a very difficult situation towards the end of the session because documents were submitted too late. That was why he (the Chairman) had asked the Secretariat to prepare, within the next few days, a list of all the documents that would be submitted to the Committee by the

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(The Chairman)

Secretary-General and by United Nations bodies. That was also why he had suggested that by, say, 1 November, the Committee should draw up a final list of the documents it would consider at the current session.

20. Mr. LAHLOU (Morocco), referring to the documentation problem mentioned by the representative of the Soviet Union, said that his own delegation was in an even more difficult situation. The delegations of the large countries had the advantage of consisting of several members, whereas those of the developing countries generally were composed of only one or two persons and, accordingly, found it especially difficult to digest, towards the end of the session, voluminous documentation which they received late. Furthermore, because the large countries were adequately represented in the Secretariat, where their nationals occupied important posts, they were informed of what was happening well enough in advance to have time to prepare any decisions that were required. The developing countries considered that the delay in the submission of documentation, which the Secretariat had never explained, was a form of discrimination against them. They considered, moreover, that if the Secretariat had been at all aware of their difficult situation, it would have done whatever was necessary to prepare documents in good time. However, by acting as it did, the Secretariat itself created problems and showed little regard for delegations, asking them to take decisions without sufficient preparation.

21. Mr. GOSS (Australia) said that the volume of documentation to be considered presented just as many problems for the delegations of the developed countries as for those of other countries. He suggested that the deadline for the consideration of documentation and proposals should be 1 December, and he expressed the hope that the inconveniences experienced in that connexion would serve as a lesson for the future. He also suggested that potentially controversial questions or those that gave rise to a number of differing proposals should, as in the past, be discussed in working groups rather than in the plenary Committee. A detailed programme of work should be given to delegations every week **or fortnight for the following week or fortnight**. Lastly, the Committee might, towards the middle of the session, hold some meetings at the same time as the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, with a view to lightening its programme of work.

22. The CHAIRMAN said that the question of a time-limit would be considered by the General Committee and that working groups would be set up as they were required. Every Friday, a list of the items to be discussed the following week and the schedule of meetings would be posted in the meeting-room.

23. Mr. BROTDININGRAT (Indonesia), referring to the Chairman's suggestions concerning the organization of work for the next two weeks, asked what considerations had governed the selection of items.

24. The CHAIRMAN explained that the items to be discussed had been chosen primarily on the basis of the documentation available in all the working languages.

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25. Mr. HOUNA GOLO (Chad) stressed that the documentation submitted for consideration by the Committee must appear in all the working languages of the United Nations.

26. The CHAIRMAN confirmed that the Committee would discuss only those Secretariat documents that had been submitted in all the working languages.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.