



General Assembly

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Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects Second session

Summary record of the 20th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 15 January 2001, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Dos Santos (Mozambique)

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The meeting was called to order at 4.05 p.m.

Modalities of attendance of non-governmental organizations at the sessions of the Preparatory Committee (A/CONF.192/PC/L.7/Rev.1)

1. **The Chairman** said that the Preparatory Committee had nearly reached consensus on a decision on the modalities of attendance of non-governmental organizations at the sessions of the Preparatory Committee as well as at the Conference (A/CONF.192/PC/L.7/Rev.1). He would continue to hold informal consultations with a view to ensuring that the concerns of all delegations were reflected in the final text. As an interim measure, which should not constitute a precedent, he suggested that, without prejudice to the decision to be taken, the Preparatory Committee should allow non-governmental organizations to address it in informal consultations on the morning of 18 January 2001, as envisaged in the programme of work for the current week. He hoped that, by the end of the week, the Preparatory Committee would take a decision to allow such organizations to participate in its formal meetings as well.

2. **Mr. Wu Haitao** (China) said that it was important to take a decision as soon as possible on the participation of non-governmental organizations in the Preparatory Committee's meetings, since their experience and expertise with regard to combating the illicit trade in small arms would be of great value. He supported the Chairman's suggestion that, pending a final decision, non-governmental organizations should be allowed to address the Preparatory Committee in informal consultations. However, that arrangement should not set a precedent. The programme of work for the current week should be revised to indicate that the Preparatory Committee would hold informal consultations, not a formal meeting, on the morning of 18 January.

3. **The Chairman** said that a revised programme of work reflecting that understanding would be issued. He took it that the Preparatory Committee wished to invite non-governmental organizations to address it in the informal consultations to be held on the morning of 18 January.

4. *It was so decided.*

Recommendations to the Conference on all relevant matters, including the objective, a draft agenda, draft rules of procedure and draft final documents, which will include a programme of action (continued)
(A/CONF.192/PC/L.5 and A/CONF.192/PC/L.8)

5. **The Chairman** drew attention to draft rule 33 of the draft rules of procedure for the Conference (A/CONF.192/PC/L.8). He had proposed that draft rule on the basis of the experience of past conferences on disarmament. He took it that the Preparatory Committee wished to include that draft rule in the draft rules of procedure to be recommended for adoption at the Conference.

6. *It was so decided.*

7. **Ms. Verville** (United States of America) said that her delegation had joined the consensus on draft rule 33 because it was based on the assumption that every effort should be made to reach consensus on substantive matters. Her delegation looked forward to the adoption by consensus, at the Conference, of a strong and realistic final document, the strength of which would lie in the fact that it could command consensus on such an important subject. She trusted that the President of the Conference would exhaust all possible ways of achieving consensus on substantive matters.

8. **The Chairman** drew attention to the draft provisional rules of procedure for the Conference (A/CONF.192/PC/L.5) and indicated that the Preparatory Committee might have to defer its consideration of the rules that related to the structure of the Conference pending the outcome of the Chairman's ongoing consultations on the subject.

9. **Mr. Wu Haitao** (China) said that he would like clarification of two points concerning the draft rules. First, draft rule 46 indicated that the Main Committees of the Conference could set up subcommittees and working groups, while draft rule 48 indicated that the Conference could set up other committees and working groups which, in turn, could set up their own subcommittees and working groups. Thus, provision had been made for several levels of committees and working groups, whose competencies were not clear. He asked for clarification of the relations among such bodies.

10. The second point concerned draft rules 57 and 58, which appeared to be inconsistent as to whether committee meetings should be held in public or in private. He proposed that the first sentence of draft rule 57 should be revised to read, "The plenary meetings of the Conference and of the Preparatory Committee shall be held in public unless the body concerned decides otherwise". Draft rule 58 should be revised to read, "Meetings of other organs of the Conference shall be held in private".

11. **The Chairman** said that the draft rules contained in document A/CONF.192/PC/L.5 were for the Conference only, since the Preparatory Committee had already decided, at its first session, to follow the General Assembly's rules of procedure in its own meetings.

12. **Mr. McDougall** (Canada) said he agreed that draft rules 57 and 58 were inconsistent. He proposed that the first sentence of draft rule 57 should be revised to read, "The plenary meetings of the Conference and the meetings of any subsidiary body established under section III or VIII above shall be held in public unless the body concerned decides otherwise", and that draft rule 58 should be deleted. Thus, all meetings at the Conference would be held in public unless the bodies concerned decided otherwise.

13. **Mr. Mekdad** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the current wording of the draft rules of procedure reflected agreements which had been reached previously. The draft rules should therefore remain unchanged.

14. **Mr. Salander** (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that he supported the Chairman's suggestion that the Preparatory Committee should defer its consideration of some of the draft rules until the consultations on the structure of the Conference had been completed. The Preparatory Committee should ensure that all the draft rules reflected the normal practice of United Nations conferences, bearing in mind the decisions taken at the current meeting.

15. **Mr. Sandage** (United States of America) said that all the draft rules of procedure contained in document A/CONF.192/PC/L.5, including draft rules 57 and 58, reflected the current practice in the United Nations system. The Preparatory Committee should therefore adopt the entire document without revision.

16. **Mr. Du Preez** (South Africa) said that he welcomed the adoption of draft rule 33 and hoped that consensus would soon be reached on the modalities of attendance of non-governmental organizations. It seemed premature to discuss the draft rules of procedure, particularly draft rules 11, 46, 48, 57 and 58, before the structure of the Conference had been clearly established. It was logical that the Preparatory Committee should be guided by the General Assembly's rules of procedure, since the Assembly had established the Committee. Likewise, the Conference was being organized by the United Nations, and should therefore follow the Assembly's rules of procedure to the extent possible. The issue of public versus private meetings should be guided by rule 60 of the Assembly's rules of procedure, and draft rule 57 of the Conference should be brought into line with that rule. The inconsistency noted by the Chinese delegation was due to the fact that draft rule 58 contradicted draft rule 57 and rule 60 of the Assembly's rules of procedure. Accordingly, draft rule 58 should either be revised substantially, deleting the references to subcommittees and working groups, or be deleted entirely. In any event, the recommended rules of procedure should not be adopted until the discussions on the structure of the Conference had been completed.

17. **Mr. Baeidi Nejad** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said he agreed that the Preparatory Committee should first consider the structure of the Conference in the light of different models and should determine which structure was most appropriate. For example, it might be necessary to establish a drafting committee, since the Conference was to adopt an important document. If the Preparatory Committee was unable to adopt the draft programme of action, further negotiations would be necessary at the Conference; he asked whether a special body would be established to continue that process. If so, the Preparatory Committee would have to determine whether the chairman of that body should be appointed by the Member States or by the President of the Conference, or be chosen by some other means. That, in turn, would affect the Preparatory Committee's decisions concerning the presidency of the Conference. Those issues should be discussed at the next session of the Preparatory Committee; once they had been resolved, the draft rules on subsidiary bodies could be considered.

18. **Mr. Benítez Versón** (Cuba) said that he shared the concerns expressed by the delegations of South

Africa and the Islamic Republic of Iran. In addition, draft rules 24 and 51 should be consistent with the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and of similar international conferences. He wondered whether draft rule 24, paragraph 3, took the experience of previous international conferences into account, since it allotted much less time for rights of reply than did the General Assembly's rules of procedure. Draft rule 51, paragraph 1, set the quorum for Main Committee meetings at only one fourth of the participating States; that was inconsistent with draft rule 19, which set the quorum for the Conference at one third of the participating States. He asked for an explanation of the discrepancy. The draft rules should reflect previous experience as closely as possible; if precedents were to be set, they should be clearly identified and the reasons for them should be clearly understood.

19. **Mr. Yamamoto** (Japan) said that his delegation had reservations about some of the draft rules that related to the structure of the Conference, particularly those in sections II, III, VII and VIII of the draft. The draft rules could not be adopted until the structure of the Conference had been determined and the points raised by delegations at the current meeting had been clarified.

20. **The Chairman** said that the draft rules took the experience of previous United Nations conferences into account and that the discrepancies noted would be rectified. He would consult the Secretariat with a view to answering the questions posed by delegations, and would ensure that the draft rules conformed to past experience and to the General Assembly's rules of procedure. Accordingly, consideration of the draft rules would be deferred to a later stage, and any clarifications received from the Secretariat before the end of the current session would be communicated to the Preparatory Committee.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.