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**VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 2nd MEETING**

**Chairman: Mr. Roche (Canada)**

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The meeting was called to order at 3:20 p.m.

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

The CHAIRMAN: I am deeply honoured to have the privilege of chairing the meeting of this Committee, which has such a long and important record here at the United Nations. I should like to say at the outset that I am very grateful to the representative of Zaire, Mr. Bagbeni, who as Chairman of the First Committee last year nominated me for the position of Chairman this year. I know that I am expressing the sentiments of all members of the Committee when I extend to Mr. Bagbeni congratulations and gratitude for the exemplary manner in which he conducted our deliberations last year as well as for his outstanding contribution to the outcome of the work of the Committee last year.

I know that the tasks assigned to the First Committee are not easy and therefore, in our work this year, I will count on your valuable help and co-operation. I, for my part, will always be available to assist delegations in the daily business of the Committee and in the important work of consultations that we shall soon be undertaking.

I am also gratified to note that I can count on the valuable experience, competence and knowledge of the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Yasushi Akashi, and of the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Security Council Affairs, Mr. Vasilii Safronchuk. I wish to offer both of them my full co-operation. I am gratified also to note that I can count on the valuable experience of Mr. Sohrab Kheradi, Secretary of long standing in this Committee and well known to all members, and indeed also on that of his colleagues in the Secretariat. All of us will be at the service of the Committee.

## ELECTION OF THE VICE-CHAIRMEN AND THE RAPPORTEUR

The CHAIRMAN: Before we begin the election of the Vice-Chairmen and the Rapporteur, I should like to draw to the attention of members of the Committee to the decision taken by the General Assembly at its 1935th meeting, on 22 September 1971, concerning the procedure for the election of officers of the Main Committees. According to that decision, the nomination of candidates should be limited to one statement for each candidate, after which the Committee should immediately proceed to the election. Therefore, the Committee will follow this procedure today.

Mr. GUTIERREZ (Costa Rica) (interpretation from Spanish): Allow me first of all to express to you, Sir, on behalf of my country, our warmest congratulations on your election as Chairman of this important Committee of the General Assembly. Because of your personal skills, your recognized experience in disarmament negotiations and the fact that you represent a country that enjoys great respect in the international community, we are sure that with you presiding over our meetings our work will be crowned with success.

Last year my country was the first Vice-Chairman of this Committee. It was for me a most valuable experience. I learned a great deal in participating in the work of the officers of the Committee because I shared the important tasks of the then Chairman, Mr. Bagbeni Adeito Nzengeya of Zaire, and those of the second Vice-Chairman, Mr. Nashashibi of Jordan, and of the Rapporteur, Mr. Kazimierz Tomaszewski of Poland. I take this opportunity to express my thanks and those of my delegation to those officers.

Today one of the tasks of our Committee is to elect the Vice-Chairmen and the Rapporteur. According to the rules, I have the privilege of nominating as first Vice-Chairman of the First Committee Mr. Victor Batiouk of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

(Mr. Gutierrez, Costa Rica)

Born in 1939, Mr. Batiouk joined his country's foreign service in 1962, immediately after graduating from the State Institute of International Affairs in Moscow. Since then he has held various positions in the Foreign Ministry of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and represented his country in its Permanent Mission to the United Nations

Mr. Batiouk, who is at present head of the Department of International Affairs of the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry, has participated actively in sessions of the First Committee and the General Assembly. He has shown here the great experience he has acquired in the various activities and procedures of multilateral diplomacy. He has participated at various sessions of the General Assembly from its twenty-second to its thirty-second session and was active between the fortieth and forty-second sessions. He also took part in the third special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

For all these reasons we are convinced that Mr. Batiouk will contribute greatly to the success of the task you have been asked to carry out, Mr. Chairman, and therefore I have great pleasure in nominating Mr. Batiouk as Vice-Chairman of this Committee.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank the representative of Costa Rica for the nomination of Mr. Victor G. Batiouk of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic for the post of Vice-Chairman. I wish to convey to him the Committee's appreciation of his outstanding contribution to the work of the Committee in his capacity as Vice-Chairman during last year's session.

There being no other nomination, I take it that in accordance with rule 103 of the rules of procedure and with established practice the Committee wishes to dispense with the vote by secret ballot and to declare Mr. Victor G. Batiouk elected Vice-Chairman of the First Committee by acclamation.

Mr. Victor G. Batiouk (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) was elected Vice-Chairman of the First Committee by acclamation.

Mr. OBEIDAT (Jordan) (interpretation from Arabic): Since this is the first time I have spoken in the Committee, Sir, it gives me and my delegation great pleasure to take this opportunity to congratulate you most sincerely on your election as Chairman. We are fully confident that you will guide the Committee's deliberations to a successful conclusion and that under your guidance we shall be able to achieve the desired results, in view of your well-known ability and competence. My delegation's pleasure is all the greater because of the excellent, friendly relations between our two countries.

It gives me pleasure to nominate Ambassador Luvsandorjiin Bayart of the People's Republic of Mongolia for election to the post of Vice-Chairman. The Asian Group supports his candidacy.

Mr. Bayart, who was born in September 1945 in the Province of Sukh-Batar in Mongolia, graduated from the Diplomatic Academy in Moscow and speaks Russian, English and French. He joined his country's foreign ministry in 1969 and worked at the Mongolian Embassy in Algiers from 1970 to 1972, when he resumed his work at the

(Mr. Obeidat, Jordan)

Ministry for Foreign Affairs, where he remained until 1975. From 1975 to 1980 he worked as the Third Secretary and then Second Secretary in his country's Permanent Mission to the United Nations and to other international organizations in Geneva. From 1980 to 1984 he again worked in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Since 1984 he has been his country's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva. He also chaired his country's delegation to the Conference on Disarmament. He has participated in the twenty-fourth, fortieth and forty-first sessions of the General Assembly, in the First Committee. He also participated in the third special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, as Vice-Chairman of the Committee of the Whole. He has taken part in the three Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Conference that led to the Convention on the Law of the Sea, and the discussions resulting in the biological weapons Convention. In 1986 he chaired the Conference on Disarmament's Ad Hoc Committee on Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space. Mr. Bayart has also written numerous articles on peace and disarmament.

In nominating Mr. Bayart, my delegation hopes that he will be unanimously elected Vice-Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank the representative of Jordan for his nomination of Mr. Luvsandorjin Bayart of Mongolia for election to the post of Vice-Chairman. I wish to convey through him the Committee's appreciation to Mr. Ali Maher Nashashibi for his outstanding contribution to the Committee's work in his capacity as Vice-Chairman at last year's session.

There being no other nomination, I take it that, in accordance with rule 103 of the rules of procedure and with established practice the Committee wishes to

(The Chairman)

dispense with the vote by secret ballot and to declare Ambassador Luvsandorjiin Bayart elected Vice-Chairman of the First Committee by acclamation.

Mr. Luvsandorjiin Bayart (Mongolia) was elected Vice-Chairman of the First Committee by acclamation.

The CHAIRMAN: I wish to extend to the two Vice-Chairmen my warmest congratulations on the distinction that has been conferred upon them and to express my confidence that we shall work together in a very harmonious manner with a view to jointly discharging our responsibilities.

Mr. JANOWSKI (Poland): I should like first, Sir, to congratulate you sincerely on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. I share completely the view expressed by previous speakers that thanks to your outstanding diplomatic skill, experience and qualifications you will lead our work to a successful conclusion.

I also wish to congratulate our Vice-Chairmen on their election. Lastly, I wish to express my best wishes to the Secretariat, especially to Mr. Kheradi, whose assistance is of great value to all of us.

I feel it a special honour and pleasure to submit the candidacy of Mr. Virgilio A. Reyes of the Philippines for the post of Rapporteur.

Mr. Reyes, a Second Secretary of the Philippines Mission to the United Nations, is a man with an exceptional educational background and significant diplomatic experience in various fields, particularly disarmament affairs. Having completed his studies at the Manila University, obtaining a Bachelor of Arts degree in humanities and a post-graduate Master of Arts diploma in communications, Mr. Reyes travelled to France, where he obtained a doctorate in international relations at the University of Paris. Mr. Reyes also holds certificates of the Institut français de Madrid, the Goethe Institut of Madrid, the Escuela Diplomática

(Mr. Janowski, Poland)

de Madrid and the Institut d'études françaises de Touraine. He is also a graduate of the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna and of the Institut international d'administration publique of Paris.

Mr. Reyes became a consultant at the Foreign Service Institute in 1979 and subsequently was deputy director of the Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila, a post which he held until 1980. Then he completed his next course of studies at the University of Paris, obtaining in 1981 a diploma of the Etudes supérieures spécialisées d'organisations internationales. For two years he worked as a special assistant to the Foreign Minister. In 1983 he was delegated to the Philippine Mission to the United Nations. Since then he has participated in the work of the main bodies of the United Nations.

Mr. Reyes has also worked as a writer, teacher, translator and public relations officer. He has published a number of articles on foreign policy. He speaks English, French, Spanish and German. In 1987 he participated in the United Nations disarmament fellowships programme.

Bearing in mind all those superb qualifications, I believe that Mr. Reyes is exceptionally well qualified to be Rapporteur of the First Committee. I therefore nominate him for election to that post.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank the representative of Poland for his nomination of Mr. Virgilio A. Reyes of the Philippines for election to the post of Rapporteur.



(The Chairman)

I also want to thank him for his kind words addressed to me. I am certain I am expressing the sentiments of all present when, through him, I convey our gratitude to Mr. Kazimierz Tomaszewski for the tasks he so ably performed during the forty-second session.

Members of the Committee have just heard the nomination of Mr. Virgilio A. Reyes for the post of Rapporteur. As there are no other nominations, I take it that the Committee wishes to follow the earlier procedure to dispense with the secret ballot and to declare Mr. Virgilio A. Reyes of the Philippines elected Rapporteur of the First Committee by acclamation.

Mr. Virgilio A. Reyes (Philippines) was elected Rapporteur of the First Committee by acclamation.

The CHAIRMAN: I sincerely congratulate Mr. Reyes on his election as Rapporteur, and I invite him to take the place reserved for him on the podium.

I call on the representative of Zaire, Ambassador Bagbeni Adeito Nzengeya, Chairman of the First Committee at the forty-second session of the General Assembly.

Mr. BAGBENI ADEITO NZENGEYA (Zaire) (interpretation from French):

Mr. Chairman, at the outset I thank you for your kind words addressed to me, which reflect the friendship and co-operation that have linked us since the forty-first session of the General Assembly, at which you were Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

As Chairman of the First Committee at the forty-second session of the General Assembly, it was my privilege and pleasure, at our first plenary meeting, to put forward your candidacy for the chairmanship of the Committee. Backed up by your undoubted talents as a negotiator, an eminent diplomat and a man of letters, I put forward your candidacy, which was unanimously welcomed by the General Assembly, clearly indicating the great confidence of all members and their commitment to

(Mr. Bagbeni Adeito Nzengeya, Zaire)

providing you with all possible assistance and co-operation as you fulfilled your mandate. Please be assured of the full readiness of my delegation to do likewise.

I also wish sincerely to congratulate Ambassador Victor Batiouk of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and Ambassador Bayart of Mongolia on their election as Vice-Chairmen. Their intellectual and moral qualities, as well as their professional qualifications, are an earnest of the effectiveness of the contribution they will make to the success of the important work before us, particularly the task of the Chairman.

Similarly, I congratulate Mr. Reyes of the Philippines, who has been elected Rapporteur of our Committee and will assume very weighty responsibilities.

Since I am speaking after the constitution of the Committee's Bureau, I cannot fail to express my profound gratitude to all the members of the Committee for their active participation in, and substantial contribution to, the work and deliberations of the Committee at the forty second session. Their co-operation proved particularly effective in overcoming all the difficulties the Committee had to face last year.

Here I have an opportunity to express my gratitude to all the members of the Group of Friends of the Chairman, in particular the Vice-Chairmen, His Excellency Ambassador Carlos Jose Gutierrez, Permanent Representative of Costa Rica and Mr. Ali Maher Nashashibi, Minister Plenipotentiary of Jordan, and the Rapporteur, Mr. Kazimierz Tomaszewski, Counsellor to the Permanent Mission of Poland at the United Nations. They were all able to afford me valuable advice for the proper guidance of the Committee last year.

I also benefited from the logistical support of Mr. Yasushi Akashi, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, and Mr. Vasilii Safronchuk, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Security Council Affairs, to both of whom I should like to convey my sincerest thanks.

(Mr. Bagbeni Adeito Nsengeya, Zaire)

As far as the Secretariat is concerned, I should like to make special mention of the Committee Secretary, Mr. Sohrab Kheradi, for the very competent and devoted way in which he assisted me in my functions as Chairman of the Committee. All his colleagues joined him in giving me valuable assistance and unfailing co-operation, which made it possible for me to steer the work of the First Committee to a safe harbour.

The First Committee is starting its work this year in an atmosphere imbued with hope, marking, as it does, a new era in which the disputes that have subsisted up till now between a number of countries seem to be moving towards happy outcomes, and in which confrontation is giving way to dialogue and concerted action is leading to specific steps to improve world security.

The Nobel Peace Prize, which has been awarded to the United Nations Peace-keeping Forces, is an undeniable illustration of this new era of peace and perhaps unity throughout the world, particularly in the field of the peaceful settlement of disputes.

In fact this is the first time since the Second World War that the two nuclear super-Powers have committed themselves to embarking upon nuclear disarmament. The Treaty signed in Washington on 8 December 1987, which was subsequently ratified in Moscow, on the elimination of intermediate-range and shorter-range nuclear missiles, is undoubtedly a historic event of prime importance towards the reduction of nuclear arsenals.

The First Committee, which on 21 October 1987 addressed a pressing appeal to the two super-Powers to finalize their agreements in order to conclude them in accordance with their commitments, should today express its gratitude to President Reagan of the United States and President Gorbachev of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics for responding positively to our appeal and concluding that agreement with courage and determination.

(Mr. Bagbeni Azeito Nzengeya, Zaire)

Our Committee expects that the two countries will pursue their negotiations in the field of the reduction of nuclear strategic arms, which should lead to agreements in accordance with the rules of equilibrium and verification. Of course, the reduction of conventional weapons is likewise a concern of ours.

In this context we earnestly hope that concrete and verifiable agreements will be concluded in the very sensitive area of military security and co-operation in Europe among the 35 participants in the Stockholm Conference on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe.

The efforts made by the Geneva Disarmament Conference in the field of chemical weapons also should be welcomed since the draft convention prohibiting the utilization of chemical weapons is virtually within our grasp.

The creation of areas free of nuclear weapons urgently requires consideration by the First Committee, as do the results of the programme adopted as a result of the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development, held in New York from 24 August to 11 September 1987.

During the forty-third session the First Committee will have to take up very complex matters relating to disarmament and international security. Once again we must make every possible effort to carry out these tasks constructively to respond to the appeal of the international community for general and complete disarmament under effective international control.

At the conclusion of the work of the General Assembly at its forty-second session, the First Committee adopted 62 draft resolutions and one draft decision; it did not take up 16 other drafts, which therefore were not voted on. Of the draft resolutions that were adopted, 25 were not put to a vote. That represents a definite improvement in the harmonizing of viewpoints among States in the various areas of disarmament.

(Mr. Bagbeni Adeito Nsengeya, Zaire)

Among the major subjects of interest for Member States dealt with at the forty-second session, the cessation of the nuclear arms race, nuclear disarmament, the cessation of nuclear testing, the prevention of nuclear war, chemical weapons and verification were subjects of several draft resolutions. The question of preventing an arms race in outer space took on particular importance; in fact the Committee had before it four draft resolutions reflecting the views of various political groups, drafts that after intensive consultations were finally merged into a single document. If that draft could not be adopted unanimously, the efforts made to come up with a single text demonstrated the concern of the international community that outer space be used exclusively for peaceful purposes.

(Mr. Bagbeni Adieto Nzengeya, Zaire)

Although the primacy of nuclear disarmament must always be underlined, conventional disarmament itself took a very prominent place in the debates last year and a number of draft resolutions on this subject were submitted.

May I say that at that session the deliberations of our Committee on the items referring to international security were carried on in a very favourable context because of the recent evolution in Soviet-American relations and the negotiations on disarmament. The statements made by delegations were marked by renewed hope and optimism concerning the goal of building a safer world for all nations.

As in the previous year, the proposal of the socialist countries with regard to a general system of international peace and security gave rise to a very lively debate, one that was extremely thorough and imbued with an atmosphere of great frankness.

Very constructive approaches and a spirit of compromise prevailed throughout the deliberations at the forty-second session, a fact which led to the adoption by consensus of this considerable number of draft resolutions on arms limitation and disarmament.

During my chairmanship, I presented a report on the improvement and rationalization of the work of the First Committee. As everyone is aware, a resolution was adopted to that end.

The way to rationalize our work, which was to group together similar items as well as proposals on them into clusters of draft resolutions, made it possible for our Committee to progress and to take decisions in record time, strictly in accordance with the timetable laid down.

You yourself, Mr. Chairman, lent a personal touch to all those consultations, both in the contact group and in the informal groups; indeed, you followed with

(Mr. Bagbeni Adieto Nzengeya, Zaire)

great interest and with great assiduity everything we were doing in that particular area. I am convinced, therefore, that you are in the best possible position to pursue those efforts in order to improve and rationalize the work of our Committee with the valuable assistance of our Committee Secretary, Mr. Kheradi, whose eminent qualifications and technical competence in disarmament matters are well known to us all.

Mr. Chairman, all I have to do now is to wish you every success in your work.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank Ambassador Bagbeni very much for that important statement and I should like also to thank him on behalf of the two Vice-Chairmen and the Rapporteur for his gracious comments. It is certainly a source of satisfaction to me that we shall be able to have his continued support and wisdom offered to this Committee.

I should now like to call on the first of the two new Vice-Chairmen, the representative of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Mr. Victor Batiouk.

Mr. BATIOUK (Ukrainian SSR) (interpretation from Russian): First of all, I should like to express my sincere gratitude to the members of the First Committee who elected me, at the very kind instance of the representative of Costa Rica, Ambassador Carlos Gutierrez, to the position of Vice-Chairman of this First Committee. I am very grateful for the faith which has been placed in the Ukrainian delegation and I should like to assure all members of the Committee that I shall do everything I can to assist in the successful consideration by the First Committee of disarmament matters and the question of international security which appear on the agenda of the present session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Chairman, I should like warmly to congratulate you on your election to this very responsible post. It will give me great satisfaction to work under your

(Mr. Batiouk, Ukrainian SSR)

leadership, since I have known you personally, not only through the work of the Committee for a number of sessions of the General Assembly now, but also I had occasion to meet with you in Kiev during your mission to carry out tangible disarmament measures, visiting a number of capitals, including Kiev. Today I should like to refer to one feature which I particularly admire in your character, and that is your optimism. Throughout the gloomiest and most pessimistic period we have witnessed in disarmament affairs, you always remained a believer in and a firm protagonist of serious work towards disarmament. As events have proved this year, and as the beginning of the work of our session has shown, the historic prospects are on the side of your optimistic view, which I also share.

Together with you, Mr. Chairman, and with the other officers of the Committee elected today, Ambassador Bayart and Mr. Reyes, and with the assistance of the Under-Secretary-General, I should like to make use of the opportunity of this new era in the history of the United Nations to express my faith in the result of the peaceful initiatives of our Organization, as a result of the work of the First Committee, and I should like to say that this faith has become further strengthened.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank Mr. Batiouk very much for his very gracious words addressed to me. I too remember my visit to Kiev with great affection.

I shall now call upon the second of the new Vice-Chairmen, the representative of Mongolia, Ambassador Bayart.

Mr. BAYART (Mongolia) (interpretation from French): First of all, I should like very sincerely to thank the outgoing Vice-Chairman of the First Committee, the representative of Jordan, for having put forward my candidacy for the post of Vice-Chairman of the First Committee. I should also like very sincerely to thank the Asian Group, as well as all the members of our Committee, for the trust which they have placed in me by electing me to this very important



(Mr. Bayart, Mongolia)

post. I should like from the very outset to assure the Committee that as Vice-Chairman I shall spare no effort to serve the Committee.

Mr. Chairman, I should like now to address to you my sincere and heartfelt congratulations on your unanimous election to the chairmanship of our Committee. It is undoubtedly a matter of great pleasure for me to have this opportunity to work side by side with you, an eminent diplomat, whose professional and personal qualities and whose wealth of experience and knowledge of disarmament affairs are all an earnest of the success of the work of our Committee. I also know you personally, Mr. Chairman, and have done so for many years now, as a participant in the work of the First Committee, and I should like to recall that a few weeks ago I had the pleasure of carrying out some consultations with you in Geneva during the session of the Conference on Disarmament.

Finally, permit me also to congratulate the other Vice-Chairman, Mr. Batiouk, and the Rapporteur of our Committee, Mr. Reyes. I am quite certain that our co-operation will be a fruitful one.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank Ambassador Bayart for his very kind comments and assure him that I too look forward to continuing our consultations.

I now call on the representative of the Philippines, Mr. Virgilio Reyes, who has just been elected Rapporteur.

Mr. REYES (Philippines): I should like to express my sincere appreciation to the members of the First Committee for electing me as its Rapporteur. It is indeed a great honour for my country, which considers disarmament and international security as two of the most important issues of our time. For this reason, Sir, we are especially pleased to see you preside over the deliberations of the First Committee at the forty-third session of the General Assembly.

As we all know, this is going to be a very important session in the light of today's momentous developments and great prospects in the fields of international peace, security and disarmament. It is most appropriate that you have been chosen unanimously to be Chairman of this session. Canada's leading role in the area of international peace and security is well-known. You are indeed a worthy representative of your country. Your wisdom, consummate skills as a diplomat and vast experience will surely guide the work of this Committee in a highly satisfactory manner. We might mention in passing that, auspiciously, on your advent we welcome the brisk and invigorating winds of Ottawa and perhaps even of Geneva in New York. We therefore congratulate you on your election and pledge our full support to you and to the members of the Committee.

I should like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Bayart of Mongolia and Mr. Batiouk of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic on their election as Vice-Chairmen. I look forward to the prospect of working with them and count on their valuable experience.

We will also rely on the support of the Department for Disarmament Affairs under the expert guidance of its head, Mr. Yasushi Akashi, and of the Department for Political and Security Council Affairs under its able head, Mr. Vasily Safronchuk. In this connection, we welcome the fine assistance and

(Mr. Reyes, Philippines)

co-operation of Mr. Sohrab Kheradi, Secretary, of the First Committee, as well as that of his colleagues in the Secretariat. I wish to thank my colleague from Poland, Mr. Alexander Yanovsky, for his extremely kind words about me in his nomination. We would like to ask him to convey our appreciation to Mr. Kazimierz Tomaszewski for his outstanding work as Rapporteur of the First Committee in the preceding year.

In closing, I wish to assure the members of the Committee that I will do my best to prove worthy of their trust and confidence.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank the Rapporteur, Mr. Reyes, for his comments. It is very pleasant to hear these very flattering remarks about me but in the interests of the business of the Committee I must now draw the attention of the Committee to rule 110 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, which reads as follows:

"Congratulations to the officers of a Main Committee shall not be expressed except by the Chairman of the previous session - or, in his absence, by a member of his delegation - after all the officers of the Committee have been elected".

On behalf of the members of the bureau, we appreciate having your support and will try to ensure that we do not lose it.

The Committee has now concluded the consideration of the first item on its agenda, the election of Officers.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK (A/C.1/43/1 and A/C.1/43/2)

The CHAIRMAN: I draw the attention of delegations to document A/C.1/43/1 of 23 September 1988, containing a letter dated 23 September 1988 addressed to me by the President of the General Assembly and informing me that the General Assembly has allocated 26 items to the First Committee for its consideration - namely, items 51 to 73, 139, 141 and 145.

(The Chairman)

With respect to the proposed programme of work and timetable as contained in document A/C.1/43/2, I wish to point out that the programme was developed following intensive consultations that were held in many capitals, in Geneva, and in New York at an open-ended meeting in September, and also taking into account the various very useful initiatives that have been forthcoming on the question of further rationalisation of the work of the First Committee. Accordingly, we have paid attention to the relevant recommendations of the General Assembly as well as the views expressed on the subject in the consultations.

You may recall that, according to established practice, the First Committee commences its substantive work only after the conclusion of the general debate in the Assembly. The rationale behind this tradition is well-known and I therefore need not go into it. But, on the other hand, I did find in the consultations that I conducted, the view that the beginning of our substantive work should be advanced by one week. So we have two schools of thought on when the substantive work should begin. Most delegations, however, expressed to me their preference for starting in the normal, well-established pattern, that is to say, after the conclusion of the general debate in the Assembly. In referring to this matter, I want to assure any delegation that has an alternative viewpoint that the issue will be fully addressed in the course of the consultations that I intend to conduct on the question of further rationalization of the work of the Committee. Those questions will again be reviewed in the group of Friends of the Chairman, which is an open-ended group that will meet for the first time on Monday, 17 October, at 3 p.m.

The Committee will also recall that the General Assembly, at its third meeting on 23 September 1988, decided, on the General Committee's recommendation, that in view of the financial problems still being faced by the United Nations, and in the context of a closing date for the session, to make every effort to curtail, to the

(The Chairman)

maximum extent practicable, the duration of the forty-third session, although no specific date for its termination was set. I, therefore, believe that it would be desirable in the context of what the President of the General Assembly has indicated as his wish and his target date for completion of the work of the General Assembly and completion of work in the Committees, we ought here to organise our programme in such a way as to be able to conclude the work of the First Committee by 30 November at the latest.

(The Chairman)

These parameters leave the Committee with a period extending from Monday, 17 October to Wednesday, 30 November, giving us a total of 32 working days in which the Committee could hold a maximum of 64 meetings, provided the requisite conference services are available; there might have to be a little fine tuning here and there. Last year the First Committee held a total of 57 meetings, and therefore I believe that if we make a genuine concerted effort to utilize fully the resources available to us in as effective a manner as possible, and emulating the productivity of last year and the year before, we can accomplish our task without undue difficulties. Moreover, although 24 November is an official United Nations holiday we could if need be set that date aside in reserve in case we need additional meetings at that time.

I hope that, taking into account all questions of timing and the financial exigencies of the Organization, everything possible can be done to avoid the necessity of night meetings or Saturday meetings since they would defeat the very purpose of encapsulating the Committee's proceedings into a shorter period. I shall certainly do everything I can to ensure that such extra meetings are not required.

As I stated a moment ago, the proposed programme of work and timetable members have before them has been prepared on the basis of past practice and precedents that have evolved over many years and that have served the Committee well. Accordingly, members will observe that the 26 items on the agenda before us have been broken down, in the normal way, into three categories: those items dealing with disarmament - items 51 to 69, 139, 141 and 145; the item relating to the question of Antarctica, item 70; and those items related to international security - items 71, 72 and 73. Members will note moreover that this year three new items have been allocated to this Committee: items 64 (k), 141 and 145.

(The Chairman)

Following consultations and the action taken in the General Committee and by the respective sponsors of those items, these items have been incorporated into the group of disarmament agenda items.

As indicated in the programme of work, the Committee would first take up agenda items relating to disarmament. With respect to those items, in order to ensure the best use of resources available, the programme before the Committee shows them as being dealt with from 17 October to 2 November, or in a maximum of 26 meetings devoted to a single general debate on all disarmament items, during which delegations may also speak on specific issues of their choice.

The period from 3 to 18 November, a maximum total of 24 meetings, would be devoted to consideration of and action upon draft resolutions on all disarmament agenda items submitted to the First Committee. I think the time allotted for this phase of our work should be sufficient for delegations to consider the draft resolutions and undertake the necessary consultations so as to ensure that the texts finally adopted reflect the maximum possible degree of consensus. Here I want to note that the time set aside for this period - 3 to 18 November - represents an increase of approximately 25 per cent compared with last year's time-frame; there is thus more time built into the programme for consultations with a view to effecting mergers where possible. As we know, the Committee itself has previously expressed a desire to have this time available. I shall be doing everything I can to encourage delegations in an appropriate manner to conduct consultations with a view to merging draft resolutions where possible.

I should note also that the voting procedure established previously of grouping draft resolutions into logical clusters will be maintained. The voting schedule will be provided in the normal manner.

(The Chairman)

The deadline for the submission of draft resolutions on disarmament agenda items - the first part of our schedule - would be Monday, 31 October, at 6 p.m., and I appeal to delegations for their co-operation in adhering strictly to that deadline. As members will note, we have set deadlines at as early a stage as possible, proportionately earlier than previously, in order to allow sufficient time for delegations to undertake the necessary consultations before the voting period begins.

I therefore urge delegations to submit and introduce draft resolutions as early as possible, even during the period of the general debate if that suits them, so that all delegations can address the draft texts as early as possible.

In that regard, I should like to urge delegations to speak as early in the debate as they can, and not to cause the speakers' list in the last days of the debate to become so crowded that we must be here for unduly long hours. There is space available on the speakers' list for speeches to be made in the early stages of the debate. If delegations could communicate their desires in this regard to the Secretariat, that would certainly be appreciated.



(The Chairman)

With respect to draft resolutions that will entail programme budget implications that need to be reviewed by the Fifth Committee, that need provides an extra reason for submitting those draft resolutions as early as possible.

The Committee, after concluding consideration of agenda items related to disarmament, will then move on to agenda item 70, which deals with the question of Antarctica. Here, the Committee is prepared to devote 21 and 22 November for that purpose, providing a total of four meetings. The time set aside for the consideration of that item would be equal to that allocated at our previous session. The deadline for the submission of draft resolutions under agenda item 70 would be Monday, 21 November, at 12 noon.

Lastly, the First Committee will turn its attention to agenda items 71, 72 and 73, dealing with international security, from 23 to 30 November 1988. That provides a total of 10 meetings available for the general debate on those items and for consideration of and action upon draft resolutions to be submitted with respect to them. I believe that, based on our past experience, we can safely assume that the time allocated for consideration of all those agenda items should provide suitable opportunity for delegations to hold necessary consultations. The deadline for submission of draft resolutions on international security agenda items will be Thursday, 25 November, at 6 p.m.

Based on the programme of work and timetable now before it, the First Committee would be in a position to dispose of all the agenda items allocated to it by the General Assembly within the time available, namely, ending its work on Wednesday, 30 November. I should like to emphasize that this programme of work and timetable is based on the assumption that due flexibility would be retained in our use of the time and resources made available to the Committee.

However, I think that the programme of work, which was based on broad consultation, will meet the Committee's needs and allow us to fulfil our

(The Chairman)

responsibilities to the General Assembly. I am now prepared to ask the Committee for its consent to the adoption of the programme of work and timetable I have outlined, which are contained in document A/C.1/43/2. Does any delegation have any comments?

Mr. FAHMY (Egypt): I will abide by rule 110 and go directly to my comments on the programme of work and timetable.

For a number of years now your predecessors have attempted to rationalize the work of the First Committee with a view to enhancing its effectiveness. You yourself, through your consultations, the informal meetings and the timetable proposed, are obviously following through on the proposal.

We recognize that in the timetable proposed in A/C.1/43/2 you have provided for about 25 per cent more time for informal consultations between the period 3 to 18 November. I would, however, like to say that we sincerely believe that, in view of the large number of items on the Committee's agenda and the numerous draft resolutions with which we are faced every year, we still believe that it is important to have even more time for informal consultations. We believe that the best way to utilize that time and to provide it is to do so even before draft resolutions are formally submitted to the Committee. We think that that can be achieved, as you said, by starting a bit earlier in our proceedings instead, as is the case this year, on 17 October, for the substantive part of our work.

We had envisaged started approximately a week earlier, while keeping the number of meetings for the general debate the same. In other words, there would be a staggering of the number of meetings over a longer period of time. That would allow delegations to consult amongst themselves and with other delegations on how to bridge the gaps between the traditional draft resolutions we face every year.

I have to admit that this has not been possible before actually starting substantive work because of the nature of the First Committee. Many people come

(Mr. Fahmy, Egypt)

from their capitals. Others come from Geneva. We have actually to commence our work before the bulk of the documentation on draft resolutions is made available.

I listened quite carefully to the Chairman's comments at the beginning of his introductory statement, and I appreciate the points raised, some of which are of particular concern to my delegation. I will therefore say quite clearly that we do not object to the proposed timetable and programme of work. However, we think that the issue of when we start our meetings and how we provide for consultations should continue to be one which is to be discussed, in your efforts to rationalize the Committee's work, and we hope to contribute in that regard.

The CHAIRMAN: I think the representative of Egypt knows - particularly from conversations that he and I have held on this matter - that I am very sympathetic to, as well as understanding of, the important point he has made. I think probably he himself recognizes that the answer to this serious question of the appropriate starting date is contained in what he himself has described as the nature of the Committee. It has a special characteristic that it has possessed for a number of years in terms of its make-up and its relationship to other bodies.

I am grateful that the representative of Egypt has said he would not object to the programme of work. I have noted his comment and I will invite him to elaborate on it at the meeting of the friends of the Chairman in which we will be giving further consideration to the full implementation of General Assembly resolution 42/42 N, which we are in the process of implementing.

Mr. BUTLER (Australia): I too will abide by rule 110, which, I note from your reading it out to the Committee, is not a recommendation, but an imperative.

(Mr. Butler, Australia)

I do not want to delay the adoption of this excellent programme of work. I simply want to support the representative of Egypt in his expressed wish that we give consideration in the Chairman's open-ended group of friends to the question of the starting date of the Committee.

(Mr. Butler, Australia)

I think that the representative of Egypt will understand that in 1988 we have had a special situation, which was that the third special session of the General Assembly had effects on other meetings in the field of disarmament which then left us more or less with no alternative but to start the First Committee this year on the date on which it will start, namely, next Monday.

Having made that comment, I should like to end with a question, which you may have made clear in your very comprehensive statement, but could you give us an indication as to what day within the period 3-18 November it is expected that voting on disarmament resolutions might commence? I should be happy simply to be told what the answer is, if it is available now. I conclude my statement by saying that I strongly support the draft programme of work given in document A/C.1/43/2.

The CHAIRMAN: With respect to the question of the exact date that voting will begin on disarmament items, all I can tell the representative of Australia for certain is that voting will terminate on Friday, 18 November.

The date on which it will start will depend on a number of factors, the first of which is the availability of the room where the voting boards are. As you know, we do not vote in this room. The second will be the result of the clusters - for example, how many resolutions will be adopted automatically by consensus. We might be able to start on, say, 10 November, perhaps 11 November. I would prefer at this moment not to be pinned to an exact starting date, but I will advise the Committee at the earliest opportunity when the actual voting will begin.

It is a bit of a test period we are in this year in expanding that part of our programme by some 25 per cent to allow consultation time. In the process I have to decide how much consultation time will really be required for certain resolutions. I would say that the voting normally takes from five to seven working days, which would put us around 10 November.

(The Chairman)

At this stage, I shall ask if there is general approval of the work programme I outlined previously. Unless I hear any objection, I shall take it that there is agreement.

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: Finally I just want to mention again what I referred to earlier, that is, the efforts made by the various Chairmen at successive previous sessions in the rationalization of the work of this Committee. We have as a matter of fact here in the room today at least three of my predecessors - Mr. Vraalsen of Norway, Mr. Zachmann of the German Democratic Republic and Mr. Bagbeni of Zaire - who have, with others, led this Committee in the rationalization process that resulted in the adoption last year of General Assembly resolution 42/42 N.

On the basis of the consultations I held, it was clear to me that there was a general desire to improve the work programme, and so we have done that in the programme the Committee has just adopted, thereby implementing most of the recommendations contained within General Assembly resolution 42/42 N.

The chief measure we were not yet ready to implement concerns the rationalization of the agenda itself, that is, part A of the operative part of the resolution, and I want further attention to be given to how the agenda itself with which we are dealing has grown through the years. I must say that it is the view of many with whom I consulted that a serious effort must be made this year to try to find an acceptable regrouping or restructuring of the agenda that would then be applicable for subsequent years. I foresee this work taking place in the meetings of the Friends of the Chairman, which would then enable us, I hope, to make a recommendation to the Committee on whether we want to make, in an agreed manner, a recommendation to the General Assembly with respect to the rationalization of the agenda itself. I will have more to say on this question as we proceed.

(The Chairman)

As I mentioned, I shall convene a meeting of Friends of the Chairman on Monday afternoon to begin discussion immediately of this subject along with other relevant subjects that members wish to have discussed in respect of the continued improvement of this Committee's work.

In the light of all the financial factors affecting us in our work here, it would be helpful if we could start our meetings on time, that is, at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. and thereby endeavour to adjourn them no later than 1 p.m. and 6 p.m. respectively. As I mentioned earlier, if members could inscribe their names at their earliest opportunity on our speakers' list for the general debate, it would be most helpful.

Before we conclude I should like to draw the attention of members to the fact that the General Assembly has once again decided at this session to depart from the rule that a quarter of the members must be present for a meeting of a Main Committee to be declared open and permit the debate to proceed. The General Assembly made that recommendation on the understanding that such a departure from the rules does not involve any permanent change in the relevant provisions of rules 67 and 108 of the rules of procedure, in accordance with which the presence of a majority of members is required for any decision to be taken. We shall certainly respect this when we come to making any decisions, but in the matter of proceeding with the debate at the opening of meetings I would ask the co-operation of members so that we can start at the earliest possible moment.

The Secretariat has asked me to request members of the Committee to note that draft resolutions, amendments, revisions and co-sponsorships must be given in writing to the Secretariat in order to avoid any possible misunderstanding. Requests for the use of conference rooms for group meetings should also be communicated in writing to the Secretariat as far in advance as possible so that suitable arrangements may be made in time.

(The Chairman)

Lastly, it would be most helpful if delegations would provide the conference officers with 30 copies of all prepared statements so that they may be distributed to the appropriate persons: interpreters and so forth.

Having finished the agenda I had, and if members feel that we have started our work in an appropriate manner with respect to the election of our officers and the organisation of our work and if no delegation wishes to make any observations or remarks at this stage, I propose to adjourn the meeting now, noting that we will begin our substantive work on Monday, 17 October at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.