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Thirty-fourth session

RATIONALIZATION OF THE PROCEDURES AND ORGANIZATION  
OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Note by the Secretary-General

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. On 13 June 1979, the Secretary-General issued a report on the rationalization of the procedures and organization of the General Assembly (A/34/320) which contained a number of proposals.
2. At its 4th plenary meeting, on 21 September 1979, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee (A/34/250), adopted several of the Secretary-General's proposals relating to the organization of the session, the agenda and the allocation of items.
3. The purpose of the present document is to draw the attention of the members of the General Committee to the remaining proposals contained in the report of the Secretary-General.

## II. DOCUMENTATION

4. The increase in documentation has become one of the most critical issues with which both Member States and the Secretariat are confronted. The number of reports of subsidiary organs has doubled in the past 10 years while the number of reports requested of the Secretary-General has more than tripled during the same period.
5. In order to contribute to the solution of this problem, the Secretary-General recommends that:
  - (a) Subsidiary organs should be required to submit their reports at least six weeks before the opening of the session so that they may be available in time in all working languages;
  - (b) No reports should contain a compilation of other previous documents;
  - (c) Subsidiary organs should not annex to their reports summary records of their meetings or other material which were already distributed to all Members;
  - (d) The General Assembly, including its Main Committees, should merely note and neither debate nor adopt resolutions on those reports of the Secretary-General or subsidiary organs which do not require specific action by the Assembly;
  - (e) The General Assembly should review periodically the need for summary records of its subsidiary organs;
  - (f) Communications from Member States should be circulated as documents of the General Assembly only if they call for action to be taken by the Assembly.

### III. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

6. The role of the Chairman of a Main Committee is of paramount importance for the effective performance of its work. Accordingly, the Secretary-General recommends that:

(a) Before the conclusion of a session of the General Assembly, regional groups should agree on the distribution of chairmanships for the following session and nominate their candidates for these posts, on the understanding that, should a candidate no longer be available to serve at the succeeding session, the group which nominated him would choose a replacement; this would afford all committee chairmen a substantial period to prepare thoroughly for their tasks;

(b) Nominees for committee chairmanship should be required to have two years' prior experience in the United Nations system;

(c) During sessions, the Chairmen or other officers of the Main Committees should be entrusted by their Committees, whenever appropriate, with the conduct of informal negotiations aimed at reaching agreement on specific issues;

(d) Chairmen of Main Committees should fully exercise their authority under rule 106 and, in particular, propose more frequently the limitation of the time to be allowed to speakers or of the number of times each representative may speak.

7. To save the time of the Members on the final day of each session, which is usually one of the busiest, the Secretary-General recommends that consideration be given to dispensing with the practice of concluding statements by Chairmen of the regional groups.

### IV. RESOLUTIONS

8. As a time-saving measure and in order to make the debates more meaningful, the Secretary-General recommends that subsidiary organs reporting to the General Assembly should submit draft resolutions in order to facilitate the consideration of the items while eliminating the need for co-sponsorship by individual delegations.

9. Whenever possible, resolutions requesting the discussion of a question at a subsequent session should not call for the inclusion of a separate new item; such discussion should be held under the item under which the resolution was adopted.

### V. PLANNING OF MEETINGS

10. As a result of the substantial increase in the number of subsidiary organs and in the requests for meetings of ad hoc working groups and for informal meetings and consultations, it has become more and more difficult to meet all the needs for conference services.

11. In order to alleviate this critical situation, the Secretary-General recommends that:

(a) The Committee on Conferences should be authorized to play a more effective role in the planning of meetings and in the use of conference facilities;

(b) No subsidiary organ of the General Assembly should be permitted to meet at United Nations Headquarters during a regular session of the Assembly, unless explicitly authorized by the Assembly.

#### VI. SUBSIDIARY ORGANS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

12. Subsidiary organs constitute an essential means of ensuring the continuity of the work of the General Assembly between sessions. Nevertheless, the sharp increase in the number of subsidiary organs of the Assembly has created problems, not only in connexion with documentation, as described above, but also in the provision of conference services.

13. The Secretary-General therefore recommends that:

(a) The General Assembly should, beginning at the thirty-fourth session, review the usefulness of those subsidiary organs which have been unable to submit concrete recommendations;

(b) A moratorium on the establishment of additional subsidiary organs should be declared for a period of one year.

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