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Chairman: Mr. PIZA-ESCALANTE (Costa Rica)

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AGENDA ITEM 57 (continued)

QUESTION OF THE COMPOSITION OF THE RELEVANT ORGANS OF THE UNITED NATIONS
(A/SPC/33/L.13, L.14)

Mr. PINIES (Spain) (interpretation from Spanish): On behalf of the member countries of the Group of Western European and Other States, I wish to make a statement for the purpose of informing this Committee about the contacts which have taken place this year as a result of decision 32/427 on the question of the composition of the relevant organs of the United Nations.

As will be recalled, that decision established a contact group, to be made up of two or three representatives from each regional group, under the chairmanship of a representative of the Asian Group, on the understanding that its discussions would serve as a basis for consideration of this item by the General Assembly at its thirty-third session.

Although that contact group, according to its terms of reference, was expected to hold a series of meetings, it in fact held only one plenary meeting, on 5 April this year, and one informal meeting, on 30 October, in the Indonesian lounge and without interpreters.

At the first meeting, on 5 April, it was made clear that the purpose of the work of that contact group was to examine the proposals contained in draft resolution A/SPC/32/L.21, which sought an increase in the number of Assembly vice-presidencies so that five could go to the African Group and four to the Asian Group - in other words, nine Assembly vice-presidencies, as opposed to the seven envisaged in resolution 1990 (XVIII).

Furthermore, we must not forget that one of the objectives which both the African and the Asian Group had in mind was to separate the vice-presidencies of the General Assembly and the chairmanships of committees so that each group would know the exact number it was entitled to, as in the case of other regional groups.

After the representatives of these regional groups had expressed their views, the Chairman announced that the contact group would be reconvened in

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order to examine those viewpoints. Subsequently, the Chairman of the contact group decided to undertake bilateral talks, which were held personally with me, concerning the Group of Western European and Other States.

Actually, the representative of India, Mr. Jaipal, had addressed a note to me on 17 April 1978 in which he presented his proposed distribution for the chairmanships of the Main Committees among the five regional groups for a four-year period, using as a basis the Eastern European Group, which was allotted one post of vice-chairman. With regard to the vice-presidencies, he suggested that the Eastern European Group, which was smaller, should receive two vice-presidencies and, on that basis, 5 vice-presidencies should be allocated to the Group of Western European and Other States, 6 to the Latin American Group, 8 to the Asian Group and 10 to the African Group.

In that manner, the number was increased from 13 vice-presidencies - 17, taking into account that the group which assumes the presidency of the Assembly loses one post of vice-president - to 31.

Ambassador Jaipal's proposal was examined first by the contact group of Western European and Other States - Australia, Denmark and Spain - and later on by the group as a whole. The result of this analysis was a simplification of the procedure which had been suggested by the contact group, and the counter-proposal allotting one vice-presidency for every 10 countries, maintaining the vice-presidencies of the General Assembly for the permanent members of the Security Council in order to follow the tradition that they are excluded from chairmanship of the Main Committees, and at the same time maintaining the status quo regarding the chairmanships of the Main Committees.

Now, the African Group had hoped that it would obtain the standing chairmanship of another Committee. Let us recall that in resolution 1990 (XVIII) the African Group was allocated two posts of Committee chairman for two consecutive years, and in the third year only one. Since what the African Group desired was to have an additional Committee chairmanship in the third year, it seemed appropriate to compensate it by giving it one additional vice-presidency, as would be done with the Asian Group, as long as the rotation system for the chairmanship of Committees provided for in resolution 1990 (XVIII) was maintained.

With that counter-proposal, which the Chairman of the contact group considered favourable to the interests of those groups, the Asian and African Groups

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received 11 Assembly vice-presidencies and three Committee chairmanships: in all, 14 posts in the General Committee, instead of the 10 it had had before.

At the meeting held on 30 October in the Indonesian lounge, the Chairman of the contact group referred to the draft resolution which later became A/SPC/33/L.13, which is now before us for consideration. Those of us who were present at that meeting seemed to be satisfied, and with regard to the Group of Western European and Other States the only objection raised was as to the advisability of postponing consideration of the question referred to in operative paragraph 3, which was to have taken place at the thirty-fourth session of the Assembly, until the thirty-fifth or possibly the thirty-sixth session of the General Assembly.

To sum up, we held very few meetings. If the objections now raised by some regional group had been raised during the year, we could have taken them up in order to satisfy all groups, bearing in mind the importance of adopting decisions of this type by consensus. Geographical distribution, naturally, requires regional representation.

It should be noted that in what might be termed the European and Asian counter-proposals, a solution was sought that would not be prejudicial to any group of countries. Now, however, the Group of Western European and Other States is being sacrificed without its having had the time and opportunity to consider other possible solutions, which undoubtedly exist.

We should also like to stress that if the African amendments were approved the result would be that the 20 members of the Group of Western European and Other States for purposes of distribution of vice-presidencies and chairmanships of Main Committees would be given only three posts - two vice-presidencies and one Committee chairmanship - out of 28 States Members of the General Committee of the Assembly. In other words, for the other groups, a more or less mathematical ratio is used in their favour, but in the case of our group this ratio is considerably reduced, so that it is not receiving what it would be entitled to according to that formula. If there are 28 posts in the General Committee of the Assembly, and the Group of Western European and Other States is made of 20 Member States out of 150, on proportional basis we should have 3.8 seats.

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In conclusion, the Group of Western European and Other States wishes to postpone the question until the next session of the Assembly. If that were done, in this coming year we could examine all the possibilities that might satisfy all groups in order to maintain a consensus on this important matter. Early in the meetings of this Special Political Committee next year we could adopt a relevant draft resolution for the amendment of resolution 1990 (XVIII).

As regards chairmen of the Main Committees, this postponement would in no way be detrimental to the various regional groups, because the Group of Western European and Other States at the thirty-fourth session of the General Assembly, according to resolution 1990 (XVIII), will have only one Committee chairmanship, whereas the African, Asian and Latin American Groups will have two each, and the Eastern European Group will retain one chairmanship.

In that way, we would not be harming any group in any way, because in the coming year the distribution would be similar to that contemplated in the African Group proposals, with one difference, that we could work throughout the year - not bilaterally but in a contact group, which was established by the Assembly but which unfortunately during this past year held only two meetings.

We hope that this proposal will be acceptable. I understand that the Chairman of my regional group will have specific proposals to make.

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