



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 3rd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. TALIEH (Iran)

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UN DOCUMENTS
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UN/SA COMMISSION

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK (A/C.5/32/L.3)

1. The CHAIRMAN drew the attention of the Committee to the tentative programme of work in document A/C.5/32/L.3 which had been prepared by the Secretariat and to the letter from the President of the General Assembly in document A/C.5/32/2 regarding the allocation of agenda items.
2. He had discussed the suggested programme of work with many members of the Committee, and the general reaction to it had been very encouraging. Most of those to whom he had spoken, while describing the target of early December for the conclusion of the Committee's substantive work as "ambitious", had pledged their full co-operation in seeking to attain that target. Document A/C.5/32/L.3 represented the first attempt to suggest a daily programme of work, which was the only way to enable the Committee to monitor its progress effectively and take corrective action as soon as it detected deviations from its programme.
3. The suggested programme provided for full use of the time available to the Committee during the first few weeks of the session, a period which traditionally had been wasted by the scheduling of fewer meetings than were possible. The suggested programme of work would result in a more even distribution of work and eliminate pressure on delegations at the end of the session.
4. Consideration of individual sections of the budget had been scheduled to begin immediately after the general debate. In order to permit flexibility in the implementation of the programme of work, no indication had been given as to which section of the budget would be considered at a given time; the Committee would be given at least one week's notice before each section was scheduled for consideration.
5. In order to ensure the successful implementation of the proposed programme of work, he wished to make some suggestions. Forty-eight hours after the introduction of every major item the list of speakers for that item should be closed. Delegations should make their statements in the order in which they appeared on the list of speakers. As a general rule, the Committee should hold as few night meetings as possible but, if the time allocated to an item in the programme of work proved to be insufficient, night meetings would be arranged to provide the additional time required. That would eliminate the need for night meetings towards the end of the session. Also as a general rule, summaries of discussions should not be included in the reports to the Assembly unless the Committee decided otherwise. The Rapporteur should be authorized to report directly to the Assembly on all items, except in the case of reports reflecting summaries of discussions and reports on the programme budget when the second reading and consideration of the draft report had to take place at the same time in order to accelerate the work of the Assembly. Finally, he stressed the importance of beginning meetings punctually. He would take it, if there were no objections, that the Committee approved those suggestions.
6. It was so decided.

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7. Mr. GARRIDO (Philippines) sought clarification with regard to the documentation to be submitted to the Committee for its discussion of the implications of extending Pension Fund coverage to certain former staff members of UNRWA. In effect, the Pension Board at its meeting in Nairobi had only touched upon that issue and had made no recommendation on it.
8. He asked whether the Negotiating Committee on the Financial Emergency of the United Nations had submitted a new report to the current session or whether the Committee would be considering the report that had been on the agenda of the thirty-first session.
9. With regard to the arrangements governing the United Nations Habitat Settlement Foundation, he understood that the Fifth Committee would deal with that item only after a decision had been taken on it by the Second Committee.
10. He requested further information as to the nature of the amendments to the Staff Rules which were to be considered under item 108 and the rules which were affected by them.
11. Lastly, he asked whether the report to be submitted on the use of experts and consultants in the United Nations would be a comprehensive study of all aspects of that question, including in particular a comparison of the payment of consultants by the United Nations and the other agencies of the system.
12. Mr. THOMAS (Trinidad and Tobago) said that his delegation understood that the suggested programme of work was based on the practical considerations of the availability of documentation and of Secretariat officials whose presence was useful at meetings of the Committee. He was, however, concerned about the extent to which such considerations seemed to influence the Committee's planning of its work for the session. The ambitious targets proposed by the Secretariat could be attained only if the relevant documentation became available in time. It was to be hoped that the Committee could avoid the accumulation of items for the end of the session, which often led to undue haste in dealing with certain important items. In that connexion, he noted with concern that consideration of the final performance report under item 99 was scheduled for 30 November and 1 and 2 December, just before the date proposed for conclusion of consideration of the substantive items on the Committee's agenda. Should there be delays in submitting documentation on that or any other item, flexibility would be needed in programming the Committee's discussion of the items in question.
13. With regard to the first reading of individual budget sections, he stressed the need to indicate sufficiently in advance which budget sections would be considered at specific meetings in order to allow delegations time to prepare.
14. He observed that the composition of the Secretariat (item 108) was scheduled to be considered early in the session. Given the importance of that item, his delegation would have preferred it to be scheduled for a later stage in the session. He urged flexibility in organizing the discussion of that item if, for example, additional time was needed to discuss draft resolutions which might be submitted.

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15. The CHAIRMAN assured the Committee that the tentative programme of work was, of course, subject to the availability of documents. He shared the concern expressed by the representative of Trinidad and Tobago regarding the consideration of important items at the very end of the session.

16. Mr. DAVIDSON (Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management) replying to questions raised by the representative of the Philippines, said that the report of the Negotiating Committee on the Financial Emergency of the United Nations was the same report which had been submitted the preceding year and had not been considered by the Committee for lack of time.

17. With regard to the arrangements for the Human Settlements Foundation, it was his understanding that the Fifth Committee would deal with that question after the Second Committee had disposed of the substantive aspects. The Committee might have some difficulty in adhering to the time-table set out in document A/C.5/32/L.3 for its consideration of that item, since its action would depend on the timing of the decision in the Second Committee, which in turn depended on the presence in New York of the Executive Director of UNEP. In any event, the aim was to have the relevant document ready for consideration by the Advisory Committee on 17 October, when the Executive Director of UNEP would be available at Headquarters, and for the substantive discussion of the item to take place in the Fifth Committee on 10 November or earlier, if possible.

18. As to the amendments to the Staff Rules, he drew the attention of the Committee to document A/C.5/32/3 which described consequential changes arising from decisions of the Assembly to amend the Staff Regulations with respect to the United Nations salary system. The amendments had already been promulgated by the Secretary-General and the document was, therefore, essentially for the information of the Committee.

19. Document A/C.5/32/7 on the use of experts and consultants in the United Nations, which had been available for some time, was essentially a progress report submitted in compliance with the request made by the General Assembly at its thirty-first session.

20. With regard to the observations made by the representative of Trinidad and Tobago, he assured the Committee that the Secretariat was fully aware of the importance of providing all documents at the earliest possible date. A substantial portion of the planned documentation for the Fifth Committee had already been distributed, including all documents which were to be considered up to 20 October. A number of documents that were not yet available depended upon action still to be taken by other bodies such as the Security Council (financing of UNEF and UNDOF) and the Committee on Conferences. The report of the International Civil Service Commission (item 109) had only recently been submitted to the Secretary-General. The reason for scheduling consideration of that report late in the session was that the issues raised in it were of concern to all the specialized agencies in Geneva and, accordingly, it was necessary to allow time for the executive heads to consult together at the ACC meeting at the end of October.

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21. Consideration of the report of the Joint Staff Pension Board was scheduled for late October but might be moved forward, as that report would soon become available for distribution.
22. The performance report, to which the representative of Trinidad and Tobago had referred, was intended to be an up-to-date account of the expenditure programme of the United Nations. It was a time-consuming process to assemble all the relevant data for the period ending 30 June and to produce such a report by the end of October would be a feat in itself. It would be necessary, moreover, to allow time in November for the Advisory Committee to consider and report on it.
23. Finally, the report of the Secretary-General on pensions was scheduled for distribution in early October and part of that month would have to be set aside for the Advisory Committee's consideration of it.
24. Mr. ZIEHL (Deputy Controller), referring to the question raised by the representative of the Philippines concerning documentation about the implications of extending Pension Fund coverage to certain former staff members for services with UNRWA during the period 1950 through 1960, said that at its thirtieth session the General Assembly had decided to extend Pension Fund coverage to 47 individuals who had served in UNRWA during the period 1950 through 1960 and who had still been serving in that organization as of 31 December 1975. A delegation had then requested that a report be submitted to the thirty-first session of the General Assembly on the financial implications of extending Pension Fund coverage to staff members who had served with UNRWA during the period 1950 through 1960 but who had recently retired. That report had not been submitted at the thirty-first session because certain vital information had not been available, and it would therefore be submitted at the current session in document A/C.5/32/14, which would be available shortly.
25. As pointed out by the representative of the Philippines, the Pension Board had taken no decision on the question at its meeting in Nairobi. In 1967, however, the Pension Fund had entered into an agreement with UNRWA and the United Nations whereby coverage would be extended to UNRWA staff members if and when funds could be made available.
26. Mr. NAUDY (France) said that his delegation endorsed the programme of work prepared by the Secretariat. He was sure that the difficulties concerning documentation would be overcome.
27. Mr. ABRASZEWSKI (Poland) said that his delegation fully endorsed the idea of organizing the Committee's work in the most effective way. The general debate and the first reading of individual sections of the budget were interrelated, and it might help delegations if the two items overlapped. If there were enough speakers, the general debate could be extended beyond 13 October, and the first reading of individual sections of the budget could be brought forward to 10 October. With respect to agenda item 99, he shared the concern of the representative of Trinidad and Tobago and suggested that discussion of that item should be brought forward from 30 November to 28 November. He requested additional information on the number of meetings to be held weekly and monthly, and on the number of meetings to be devoted to each item. It might prove necessary to revise the programme of work as work progressed.

28. Mr. BOUAYAD-AGHA (Algeria) suggested that discussion of agenda item 98 should be brought forward, since the item was not controversial.

29. The CHAIRMAN, referring to the points raised by the representative of Poland, said that it was too soon to decide whether the general debate should be extended. With respect to agenda item 99, he had asked the Controller to ensure that the performance report was made available at the earliest possible date. The Committee would hold at least five meetings each week, and more if necessary. The programme of work would be revised as work progressed in order to take account of the latest developments.

30. Mr. QUENTIN (Italy) said that the programme of work prepared by the Secretariat was well balanced and should remain basically unchanged. With respect to agenda item 107 (b), however, which was scheduled for 28 October, his delegation had assumed that, as in the past, appointments to the Committee on Contributions would be made in November or December, and it had made the necessary arrangements on the basis of that assumption. He therefore suggested that discussion of agenda item 107 (b) be postponed till a later date.

31. The CHAIRMAN suggested that discussion of agenda item 107 (b) should be moved back two weeks.

32. It was so decided.

33. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt the programme of work indicated in document A/C.5/32/L.3, as amended.

34. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 4.20 p.m.