



# General Assembly

Sixty-sixth session

## First Committee

2<sup>nd</sup> meeting

Friday, 30 September 2011, 3 p.m.  
New York

Official Records

*Chair:* Mr. Viinanen ..... (Finland)

*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

### Organization of work

**The Chair:** My aim is to always start the Committee's meetings on time in order to save time. I hope that all members of the Committee will respect their colleagues and come on time so that we can always start promptly. That is my aim, so let us try to keep to that model.

The focus of today's discussion is the organization of our work for the current session, as outlined in the proposed programme of work and timetable contained in document A/65/418.

Before I begin I should like warmly to welcome all delegations participating in the work of the First Committee this year. I look forward to working closely with each and every one of you in the weeks ahead. We have a full agenda, as in previous years, but I am convinced that we have the requisite will and commitment to conduct our work in a cooperative, efficient and expeditious manner.

With your active support, the Chair and Bureau are determined to guide the work of the Committee to a successful conclusion. It bears emphasizing in that regard that we will rely greatly on the Committee's usual spirit of cooperation and flexibility. The Chair also counts on the advice and support of all members of the Bureau: the three Vice-Chairs — Mr. Amr Aljowaily of Egypt, Mr. Mohammad AlMutairi of Kuwait and Ms. Ayesha Borland of Belize — and the Rapporteur, Mr. Archil Ghghechkori of Georgia. I

am sure that the Committee will benefit greatly from their collective wisdom and expertise on disarmament issues.

I am also confident that the Committee will again receive the widest possible support from the Office for Disarmament Affairs and Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, headed by Mr. Sergio Duarte and Mr. Shaaban Muhammad Shaaban, respectively.

I now turn to the main task of our meeting, the organization of the Committee's work for the sixty-sixth session. For our consideration of this item I wish to draw your attention to document A/C.1/66/L, containing a letter from the President of the General Assembly dated 16 September 2011 and addressed to me. The letter highlights the decisions taken by the General Assembly at its second plenary meeting regarding the allocation of items to the First Committee. At that meeting the Assembly decided to allocate 20 disarmament and related international security agenda items, items 87 to 106, to the First Committee for consideration during this session.

Before I proceed to give you details of the Committee's programme of work and timetable for your deliberations this year, set out in document A/65/418, I wish to remind members that the General Assembly adopted it on 8 December 2010 within the context of its consideration of the item on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly (see A/65/PV.60).

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.



The programme of work and timetable itself were prepared in keeping with past practice, taking into account a number of initiatives proposed over the past several years, including General Assembly decision 52/416 B, on the rationalization of the work of the First Committee. Also taken into account in this regard was paragraph 36 of the annex to resolution 51/241, which reads as follows:

“The First Committee and the Fourth Committee shall not meet simultaneously and may consider meeting in a sequential manner during the regular session of the General Assembly.”

However, members may have noted from document A/65/418 that on Monday, 17 October, both morning and afternoon meetings have been allocated to the First Committee. I wish to clarify that this was done in agreement between the Chairs of the First and Fourth Committees.

This year the First Committee will commence its substantive work next Monday, 3 October 2011, and will hold a total of 24 meetings to consider the agenda items allocated to it and will conclude its work in accordance with the recommendations of the General Committee. The Committee will also have to consider and take action on its programme of work for the 2012 session, in accordance with agenda item 121, concerning the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

As members know, item 135, on programme planning, has been allocated to all Main Committees as well as to the Assembly plenary in an effort to enhance the discussion of evaluation, planning, budgeting and monitoring reports. The Committee will revert to this item if the Assembly assigns any report to it.

It is noteworthy that at the last session the First Committee held 23 meetings, during which it considered 18 disarmament-related agenda items. I am confident that with your full cooperation we will also be able to accomplish our tasks in a timely fashion, in comparative terms. When I was visiting delegations in Geneva at the end of August, several suggested that we should try to wrap up our work during the month of October. We shall have to see whether we can accomplish that.

As in previous sessions, our consideration of the items allocated to the First Committee this year will

proceed in three phases, as currently reflected in the proposed programme of work and timetable. The first phase, the general debate on all items, will run from 3 to 11 October, for a total of seven meetings. The second phase, the thematic discussion on specific subjects, will run from 12 to 24 October, while the third phase, action on draft resolutions, will take place from 25 October to 1 November.

A rolling list of speakers for the general debate phase is currently open. I am aware that a considerable number of delegations have already inscribed their names on the list. I invite those wishing to speak who have not yet inscribed their names to do so as soon as possible. It is my intention to close the list of speakers for the general debate on Tuesday, 4 October, at 6 p.m.

I should also like to remind all delegations inscribing their names on the list of speakers that the rolling list means that delegations should be prepared to intervene at any time, possibly even one meeting sooner than originally planned.

To make the most efficient use of the resources allocated to us, I urge all delegations kindly to adhere to the Committee's usual practice of limiting their statements to a maximum of 10 minutes when speaking in their national capacity and 15 minutes when speaking on behalf of a group of delegations.

In this connection, it is my intention to introduce the use of a suitable timing mechanism for the first phase of our work. I invite all delegations with relatively long statements to present a concise summary of their text and to submit the full text of the statement in written form for posting on the First Committee QuickFirst Web portal. I hope that all delegations are familiar with the procedure for accessing the Web portal. For those who need assistance in that regard, kindly contact the Deputy Secretary of the First Committee, Mr. Sergej Cherniavsky.

As mentioned earlier, the second phase of the Committee's work will be the structured thematic discussion on disarmament and international security agenda items allocated to the Committee and the introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions and decisions that will be submitted under those items. For your advance information, an indicative timetable based on the established practice of the Committee for this phase has been circulated to all delegations in

document A/C.1/66/CRP.1, which has also been posted on QuickFirst.

In due course I will provide a more detailed explanation of how the Committee's work will proceed during this phase. It is sufficient for the present to note that this segment will take place from Wednesday, 12 October, to Monday, 24 October, with a total of 10 meetings allocated for that purpose. Should we complete the general debate phase ahead of schedule — before the end of Tuesday, 11 October — the Committee will decide at that time whether to start the thematic discussion segment immediately or stick to the original timetable.

As indicated in document CRP.1, it is within this second thematic phase that time has been allocated for an exchange with the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and other high-level officials on the current state of affairs in the field of arms control and disarmament and the role of international organizations with mandates in this field. A number of guest speakers have been invited to participate in this exchange.

As in previous years, the meetings during the thematic segment will be divided into two parts. The first part will begin in formal mode with a panel or guest speaker as applicable, followed by an informal question-and-answer session. The second formal part will consist of interventions by delegations on the items under consideration, as well as the introduction of draft resolutions.

Also in line with established practice, the Committee will deliberate in informal mode when considering the topics on follow-up to resolutions and decisions adopted by the Committee at its past session and for the presentation of reports, panel discussions on regional disarmament and security, a panel discussion on disarmament machinery, and a meeting with non-governmental organization participation.

To facilitate the Committee's work, especially in terms of providing sufficient time to delegations for consultations and ensuring that the Secretariat has the requisite time frame for processing draft resolutions in all official languages, I should like to propose, in the light of discussions with the Bureau, that the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions and decisions be Thursday, 13 October, at noon. This submission deadline is necessary in order to allow time for making all draft documents available as early as possible in all

official languages for the consideration of delegations. I therefore appeal to all delegations to adhere strictly to the submission deadline of noon on Thursday, 13 October.

I would even encourage members to submit draft resolutions and decisions before the deadline, if possible, to allow enough time for all delegations to seek the necessary instructions from their capitals and to consult sufficiently so that the text finally adopted will reflect the highest possible degree of agreement.

The early submission of draft resolutions and decisions would also allow all delegations the opportunity to make comments on them during the second phase. It is especially important that delegations submit all draft resolutions that might entail programme budget implications as early as possible to enable the Secretariat to prepare in a timely manner the necessary statements reflecting those implications.

Furthermore, I should like to remind all delegations that the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and the Fifth Committee require time to review the programme budget implications of a draft resolution before it can be acted upon by the General Assembly.

In that connection, I should like to draw the attention of delegations to the guidance of the General Committee contained in its report to the General Assembly in document A/66/250. In paragraphs 43 and 44 of that report the General Committee recalls resolution 45/248 B, on procedures for administrative and budgetary matters, in particular reaffirming that the Fifth Committee is the appropriate Main Committee of the General Assembly entrusted with the responsibility for administrative and budgetary matters and also reaffirming the role of the ACABQ in that context.

The General Committee further draws the attention of the General Assembly to the views expressed by the ACABQ on the use of the phrase "within available resources", as set out in document A/54/7. Accordingly, I kindly ask delegations to avoid the use of the phrase "within existing resources" in draft resolutions or decisions of the First Committee.

Finally, the third and last segment of the work of the Committee, namely, action on all draft resolutions and decisions, will cover the period from Tuesday,

25 October, to Tuesday, 1 November, with a total of six meetings scheduled for this purpose. However, we will aim to complete this phase of the Committee's work by Monday, 31 October, if not earlier. Last year the Committee concluded the final phase in five meetings, adopting 55 resolutions and 3 decisions. I therefore urge all delegations to take note of that fact. I further appeal for the Committee's full cooperation to enable us to take action on all draft resolutions and decisions in a comparable timely manner, including those involving programme budget implications.

It is my intention to retain the voting procedure we have followed in previous years, by which draft resolutions are grouped in clusters, based on the seven agreed clusters outlined in the 5 November 2004 letter from the First Committee Chair to the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session, pursuant to annex C, paragraph 3, to resolution 58/316, on further methods for the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. Those clusters are: nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction, outer space (disarmament aspects), conventional weapons, regional disarmament and security, other disarmament measures and international security, and disarmament machinery. I will provide the Committee with specific information on the final phase of our work closer to the beginning of the action period.

With this introduction, and considering that the programme has already been formally adopted and there have been no changes to it, may I take it that the Committee wishes to take note of the programme of work and timetable contained in document A/65/418?

*It was so decided.*

**The Chair:** I should now like to draw the Committee's attention to the relevant rules and recommendations of the General Assembly affecting the work of the Main Committees, including those contained in decision 34/401, especially the provisions dealing with explanations of vote, rights of reply and budgetary and financial questions, which I intend to apply, with the cooperation and assistance of all members of the First Committee.

In order to make full use of the time and facilities allocated to the Committee, I intend, with the Committee's full cooperation, to begin meetings promptly at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., and to end at 1 p.m. and 6 p.m., respectively.

I should also like to draw attention to agenda item 5 in document A/66/250, entitled "Election of the officers of the Main Committees", and also to rule 99 (a) of the rules of procedure, as amended by resolution 56/509, of 10 July 2002, which reads:

"All the Main Committees shall, at least three months before the opening of the session, elect a Chairman. Elections of the other officers provided for in rule 103 shall be held at the latest by the end of the first week of the session".

Against that background, I should like to propose that the First Committee consider this item some time in May or June 2012, about three months before the opening of the Assembly's sixty-seventh session. If I hear no objection I shall take it that the Committee wishes to proceed accordingly.

*It was so decided.*

**The Chair:** Concerning the submission of draft resolutions, we will continue with the electronic submission of drafts that was introduced at the sixty-third session. The Secretariat will provide further details in the technical briefing directly following this meeting. I encourage all delegations to remain in the room for this essential briefing.

In this context it is useful to note that we are witnessing a remarkable paradigm shift away from the distribution in paper form of United Nations documents. Across the board, United Nations documents are increasingly being issued in electronic form that makes them easily accessible to representatives through the Internet at permanent missions and in conference rooms. Taking advantage of the convenience, quick accessibility and cost-effectiveness offered by this leap, a number of United Nations committees have already switched completely to paperless operation.

Although we are still far from truly attaining a paperless status, I urge the Committee to try to work in paperless mode whenever possible by not requesting the Secretariat to pile up all documents in the conference room in all languages but to request instead copies of necessary documentation in a specific language on an individual basis.

In this connection, I recommend that the Committee not circulate documentation in the conference room but rather receive them electronically through the appropriate United Nations site and search

engines. Delegations will continue to be serviced individually if they so request by a print-on-demand service. Another dependable source could be the First Committee Web portal QuickFirst, where all documents can be easily and quickly accessed in English through the on-site search engines. By so doing we can contribute to the greening of the United Nations and save resources for the Organization. All questions in this regard should be directed to Mr. Sergei Cherniavsky.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Committee wishes to adopt this recommendation.

*It was so decided.*

**The Chair:** I should now like to draw attention to my communication dated yesterday, Thursday, 29 September, which was sent electronically. If members do not have a copy of that communication we should also have it here in paper form — in contradiction to what I said just a couple of minutes ago.

The letter specifically proposes a change in the modality of non-governmental organization (NGO) participation in such a way as to allow NGOs to make interventions during the informal segment of the meetings on the various clusters during the thematic discussion. As I pointed out in the letter, this change will help to ensure that the presentations are timely and appropriate to the topic under discussion. It would also facilitate a more interactive exchange between NGOs and Member States.

With these short remarks and the understanding that members have read the letter, I intend to open the floor for possible preliminary comments or observations that delegations might have on these proposals.

**Mr. Cassidy** (Indonesia): Since this is the first time I speak in this Committee, let me first congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the Chair.

First, I should like to thank you for the letter of 29 September with your proposal to change the mechanism for the participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). We have already discussed this in the group of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and wish to convey to you that NAM acknowledges and appreciates the participation of NGOs.

However, I wish to emphasize that communications and information sent through electronic mail should also be put in a more formal way, because some States within NAM do not receive communications in that informal way. That also impacts on the group's timely response to your proposal on this. In this context, I should like to propose that the Chair continue consultation in the First Committee on the issue of NGO participation in the coming days. I wish to stress again that the First Committee is Member-State-driven and intergovernmental. With those two issues as our frame of reference, we wish to propose that you continue these consultations in coming days.

**Mr. Moktefi** (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): As it is also the first time that I take the floor in the Committee, allow me sincerely to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the Committee at the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly. I also thank the other members of the Bureau. I assure you, on behalf of the Algerian delegation, that the Bureau will enjoy the full support of our delegation.

Before concluding the issue of the participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and without calling into question the decision on documentation that was just confirmed, I should like to remind the Committee that in the framework of revitalizing the work of the General Assembly, the position of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) group is that written documents are still important for the work of delegations. Therefore, we should not call into question the fact that the Secretariat should provide all the necessary documentation at the request of delegations. I do not wish to dwell on this question.

In addition, with regard to what Indonesia has just said on behalf of the NAM group, my delegation would like to second his position on the participation of NGOs in the work of the First Committee.

There has been an arrangement for a number of years whereby half a day is assigned to NGOs to make their statements. We believe that that arrangement is still valid and needs to be maintained. That does not mean that we underestimate the role or contribution of NGOs to the debate on issues of armaments. On the contrary, we welcome them and appreciate their contributions.

But this is a rather important and critical issue. The First Committee is an intergovernmental body

subordinate to the General Assembly, so in our interaction it is important not to hinder debates between Member States. Therefore, opening the possibility for NGOs to intervene in the debates on a daily basis could be an unwise precedent. It could even exceed the framework of the First Committee and could set a precedent for other Committees. If that is the case, I do not think the Committee is in a position, or has the competence, to take a decision on this issue.

It would also call into question the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. As we know, participation in organs of the Assembly requires submission of the composition of delegations and letters of accreditation, et cetera. These conditions are not applicable to NGOs. How could we give them a right to participate without being subject to the same rules?

Another element to take into consideration is that NGOs currently have every opportunity to make their contribution. They attend public meetings, they interact directly with delegations and have a chance to organize side events, as well as the chance to distribute documents in the room. So they have every possibility to make their contribution publically. We therefore do not see why we should add their direct daily participation in the debates.

There is also the issue of verbatim records of the meetings. These are public, official meetings. Should the verbatim records of these meetings also cover communications from NGOs? This raises many questions, and we need to find appropriate responses before we take any kind of decision on your proposal, Mr. Chair.

That is a summary of my considerations. I repeat, we should keep the formerly adopted arrangements.

**Mr. Seifi Pargou** (Islamic Republic of Iran): Allow me first to congratulate you, Sir, and our colleagues from Egypt, Kuwait, Belize and Georgia on their election as the Bureau of the First Committee. I assure you, Mr. Chair, and your colleagues of the full support and cooperation of my delegation during the meetings of the First Committee this year. I am fully confident that under your able leadership the First Committee will be able to come up with tangible and satisfactory results in the area of disarmament and arms control.

I also associate myself with the statement by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

The first issue that my delegation wishes to emphasize is the rule of law and the maximum transparency in the work of the First Committee. I am sure that under your able leadership, Sir, the observation of these two principles is fully assured.

With regard to your proposal on the participation of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs), my delegation up to now has not received any proposal at the Mission. Perhaps that is one of the reasons that, like my colleague from Algeria, I should like to insist on NAM's proposal and its principled position that we should receive all documents in hard copy. That is one example.

Although electronic communication can facilitate our work, at the same time it is not reliable. We should take that reality into account. I think we should somehow come back again to the Chair's recommendation for a decision here in this organizational meeting on the work of the First Committee. These are issues of critical importance and have their own implications for the Committee's work. We need to discuss them to see all aspects of the issue.

To be brief, I should like to come back to your proposal regarding NGO participation. My delegation associates itself with the NAM position and acknowledges the work and participation of NGOs in the work of the First Committee. But at the same time — as you, Sir, are now proposing the idea here at this meeting — my delegation, at least, needs some time to digest the idea, to report back to our capital and to receive instructions on it. That is why I propose that the Committee not move forward and take a decision on that but keep it under consideration until clear instructions have been received from our capitals.

**Mr. Laudi** (Germany): As this is the first time that I take the floor, I should like to congratulate you, Sir, on the assumption of your functions and to extend these congratulations also to the other members of the Bureau. As previous speakers have done, I should also like to assure you of the full support of this delegation.

Unlike previous speakers, we received your proposal very well, Mr. Chair. We have carefully studied it, sent it home to our capital and have received instructions. I am taking the floor to inform you and

the Committee that we fully support your proposal. We feel it is time to move ahead. We would like your proposal to be implemented at this session, as it facilitates a more realistic and authentic debate, discussion and exchange of views, be it informal, with the non-governmental organization community.

**Mr. Hallak** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): As this is the first time I take the floor, allow me first to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the First Committee at the sixty-sixth session. Congratulations also to the other members of the Bureau on their election.

First, regarding your proposal on documentation, my delegation supports the statement made by the representative of Algeria. This is a principled position, a clear principle of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) regarding the electronic distribution of documents. As there is no consensus, we would prefer to keep the distribution of documents within the conference room.

My delegation also supports what was said by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of NAM regarding participation by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). We very much appreciate the work done by NGOs, particularly within the Committee. Concerning any change proposed in the working methods of the Committee, or in any existing disarmament mechanism, we believe that this subject must be debated within the appropriate framework, and not as part of the work of the Committee.

**Mr. Suljuk** (Pakistan): My colleagues who spoke earlier offered felicitations to you, Sir, and I should also like to congratulate you and the Bureau and to assure you and the Bureau of the Pakistani delegation's full support. We look forward to a constructive First Committee session.

I too align myself with the intervention and comments made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

In line with colleagues who have mentioned some elements or issues, I should also like to raise a few issues that need to be raised at this session.

The first is the issue of transparency in the work of the Committee. We hope you, Mr. Chair, will continue with that tradition, because many times when we try to hasten things we land in a situation such as

this. We hope that we will continue with transparency in the work of the Committee.

Secondly, a related issue is the flow of information. Starting from Monday, we hope that information from the Bureau and from the Secretariat will flow smoothly. Evidence of this concern is the letter we are talking about, which was, I think, received on 29 September. Today is 30 September. For any information, a 24-hour notice is rather short, especially as we knew the Committee was to start on Monday and that the organizational session would be held on 30 September.

We ask the Chair to ensure that there is a smooth flow of information, through established channels. We appreciate the efforts towards a paperless Committee, but we must also understand that there are technical and technological limitations and that not all delegations may be at par, especially when we must coordinate with capitals as well. That takes time. We come from all across the world; there are different time zones and different limitations. This must be taken into account.

Thirdly, as I remember, Mr. Chair, you referred in your intervention to the practice of the Committee. As Member States we all know that it is a Member-State-driven process, and the practices of any committee, be it the First Committee or any other committee of the United Nations, evolve after a long phase-in period. We must respect those practices and should not be in haste to change any of them.

Linked to that again is the issue of the circulation of documents and the participation of non-governmental organizations. Essentially, coming to the point, my delegation would like to stick to the practice of the Committee, as it is too soon — a Friday evening before a Monday convening of the First Committee — to discuss any other issue or to change any practice.

I again assure you, Sir, of my delegation's full support.

**Mr. Langeland** (Norway): Like other delegations, my delegation would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the Chair. I also congratulate the other newly elected members of the Bureau.

I wish to thank you for providing us with the proposal on non-governmental organization (NGO) participation in the First Committee. Like Germany,

my delegation sent the letter home, and we have also received a reply from our capital that we should support it. What we are talking about here is basically how we can engage civil society in a meaningful way. As I understand from the letter, we are now talking about trying to involve the NGO community in the thematic segment at the end of the discussion when the list of speakers has been exhausted, so we are not interfering in the intergovernmental deliberations of the First Committee.

We know from previous experience that the traditional NGO segment in the First Committee has not always been very useful. It has been difficult to mobilize the necessary interest among Member States and the NGO community as well, so I think we should try to work in innovative ways.

Lastly, my delegation believes that the Committees — the six Main Committees of the General Assembly — have their own individual traditions and working methods. It could be possible for us to explore innovative ways of engaging civil society without weakening the intergovernmental character, but in order to ensure more constructive discussions.

**Mrs. Ledesma Hernández** (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Cuba wishes to congratulate you, Sir, on your election. We wish you every success in your leadership of our work during the meetings of the Committee.

The Cuban delegation endorses what the representative of Indonesia said on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) with regard primarily to the participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). With regard to the proposal on the rationalization of documentation, we believe that this issue is still under discussion in the plan of conferences. It is therefore vital to continue to distribute all documents in the room in all the official languages. If there is a discussion on NGO participation, we are prepared to contribute. We believe that NGOs play a fundamental role in disarmament, and we wish to underscore their importance. We also emphasize the intergovernmental nature of our discussions.

**Mr. Koller** (Austria): First, I also wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the Chair of the First Committee and to assure you of the fullest cooperation of my delegation.

We, as have others, have received instructions. We received your letter, and we think that the proposal it contains is not only worth considering but is, from the perspective of my delegation, definitely worth supporting. We think that the non-governmental organization community could contribute to our thinking here in the First Committee. The proposal to have their statements delivered in the context of the thematic debate seemed to be very pertinent. I would like to stress that — if I understand your letter correctly — these statements would be delivered in informal meetings, which might also alleviate some of the concerns raised earlier.

**Mr. Simpson** (New Zealand): At the risk of inflicting death by felicitation on you, Sir, I too wish to congratulate you on your assumption of the Chair of the First Committee for this session.

The discussion we are having has given me a sense of *déjà vu*, because it is very similar to one we had earlier this year at the meeting of governmental experts on small arms. The same issues were raised. We were very supportive of the idea of a more flexible approach to non-governmental organization (NGO) statements and their timing for a couple of reasons. First, because we felt — as you said, Mr. Chair — that it would be a good way to ensure that NGO participation would be more focused, more relevant to the discussions we were having. It also seemed to us potentially a way of becoming more time-efficient in that we would open up another session for Member States' contributions and perhaps could focus the NGO contributions on the specific elements of what they wanted to say that were relevant to our discussions.

We also encountered the same concerns, which have all been enumerated again here today. They are all valid concerns relating to the full implications of this — the precedent, the question of how much time would be allocated to this, and the timing of it. I really think this is worth talking through further, but probably the most productive way might be to do so in informal consultations, particularly if some members of the Committee have not yet had a chance to discuss this with their capitals. There is enormous merit in this proposal, but obviously we want to make sure that we take the membership along with us when and if we do decide to go ahead like this.

**The Chair**: When I was much younger than I am today, I very much liked surprises. It seems to me that



the older I grow the less I like them. So on the transparency issue, my sincere wish and purpose is that we will act as transparently as possible. I do not want to surprise any delegation, nor do I want to be surprised myself. So on this issue we can be very clear: transparency is the key in order to get good results in the Committee.

I also heard, loud and clear, the concern of many delegations about documentation and documents in the room. We will certainly have to address that. On my proposal to facilitate better participation of non-governmental organizations in the work of the Committee, we will certainly have to come back to this issue. In the coming days, with the assistance of the Bureau, I will consult delegations and regional groups on this matter. We will come back to it when

everybody has familiarized themselves with the issue, and then we can take a proper decision.

I thank all delegations for their interventions during this meeting. We are off to a very good, active start.

There will not be any rush to make any decisions today. We must see when we can take decisions in this respect in due time and after consultation with all delegations.

The Committee will begin its substantive work on Monday, 3 October, at 10 a.m. sharp in Conference Room 1. I look forward to working closely with all members in the coming weeks.

*The meeting rose at 4.05 p.m.*