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**General Assembly**

FORTY-FOURTH SESSION

*Official Records*

FIFTH COMMITTEE  
2nd meeting  
held on  
Tuesday, 26 September 1989  
at 3 p.m.  
New York

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 2nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. AL-MASRI (Syrian Arab Republic)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and  
Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

1. The CHAIRMAN welcomed the members of the Committee, the observers, representatives of the United Nations Secretariat and the specialized agencies of the United Nations, and representatives of the staff associations. The work of the Fifth Committee at the current session would more than likely present a greater challenge than usual, since the agenda was somewhat longer than in previous years and included complex items, such as the review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations, on which the Secretary-General had already presented his final report; the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1990-1991; the scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations; the report of the International Civil Service Commission; and the financing of peace-keeping operations. Naturally, there were diverse opinions on such varied and difficult items, but, with the collaboration of all concerned, the work of the Committee could be completed within the prescribed time.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

2. Ms. OLDFELT (Sweden) nominated Mr. Vaher (Canada) for the office of Vice-Chairman.

3. Mr. LADJOUZI (Algeria) nominated Mr. Dankwa (Ghana) for the office of Vice-Chairman.

4. THE CHAIRMAN said that since there were only two nominations for the two posts of Vice-Chairman, he would take it that it was the wish of the Committee to dispense with a secret ballot.

5. Mr. Vaher (Canada) and Mr. Dankwa (Ghana) were elected Vice-Chairmen by acclamation.

6. Mr. MAKAREVICH (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) nominated Mr. Ninov (Bulgaria) for the office of Rapporteur.

7. The CHAIRMAN said that, since there were no further nominations, he would take it that it was the wish of the Committee to dispense with a secret ballot.

8. Mr. Ninov (Bulgaria) was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.

9. Ms. SHITAKHA (Kenya), speaking on behalf of Mr. Okeyo, the representative of Kenya, who had presided over the Committee at the previous session, congratulated the Chairman and the other members of the Bureau on their election.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK (A/44/250; A/C.5/44/3; A/C.5/44/L.1)

10. The CHAIRMAN began by referring to document A/C.5/44/3, relating to the allocation of items to the Fifth Committee, in which the Committee's attention was drawn to the recommendations of the General Committee on the organization of the session contained in document A/44/250, section II. In particular, the Committee should note recommendation 3 (a) of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations, which the General Committee had reproduced in its recommendations and which referred to the need to utilize fully available services, as well as the recommendations on the schedule of meetings. With regard to the provisions relating to explanations of vote and the right of reply (A/44/250, para. 12), the Chairman considered that the Committee should continue its practice of indicating in its reports to the Assembly those countries that had explained their vote. With respect to the recommendations relating to the programme budget (para. 16), he noted that a deadline of 1 December had been set for submission to the Committee of all draft resolutions with financial implications. The Committee should consider the possibility of accepting without debate the Advisory Committee's recommendations on the financial implications of draft resolutions up to a limit of \$25,000 on any one item. The Chairman recommended that all delegations should familiarize themselves with document A/44/250, section II, and with General Assembly decision 34/401, relating to the rationalization of the procedures and organization of the Assembly.
11. He proposed that the list of speakers on an item should be closed 48 hours following its introduction, that statements should be made in the order in which delegations were inscribed, that representatives who were not present when due to speak should go to the end of the list for the day, and that the Rapporteur should be authorized to report directly to the General Assembly on all items considered, unless the Committee should decide to include a summary of the debate in its report.
12. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to proceed accordingly.
13. It was so decided.
14. The CHAIRMAN drew the Committee's attention to the tentative schedule of work for the session. In the preparation of the schedule, account had been taken of the availability of documentation, the availability of Committee Chairmen and the distribution of the work-load throughout the session. Note should be taken of document A/C.5/44/L.1, relating to the status of documentation of the Fifth Committee.
15. In informal consultations, it would be important to hear the opinions of all countries in order to have a sound basis for the adoption of appropriate resolutions. He therefore proposed that the chairmen of the regional groups should hold consultations with members of their groups and submit their opinions in writing 48 hours after the introduction of each item. The Bureau would review the opinions submitted by the regional groups, in consultation with their respective chairmen, so that the opinions could be harmonized and presented to the Committee

(The Chairman)

within 24 hours. If that could not be done within the time-limits proposed, in the interest of achieving a consensus, the Chairman would submit the question to the Committee at a formal meeting so that an appropriate decision could be taken.

16. Mr. NASSER (Egypt) said that the large number of documents which had not yet been issued was a matter for concern; under such circumstances it was difficult to draw up a plan of action. However, the proposed schedule of work could be provisionally adopted, on the basis of the expected date of publication of the various documents.

17. Mr. VISLYKH (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that an initial examination of document A/C.5/44/L.1 demonstrated that the Secretariat and the Chairman of the Fifth Committee had done everything possible in view of the delay in issuance of various key documents. He wondered why so many documents were late, including some documents pertaining to sessions which had taken place long before. It would appear as if, because of the delay, the schedule of work had had to be drawn up not so much on the basis of the importance and complexity of the items but rather the availability of the documents. That would seriously hinder the Committee in its work, since it would have to give simultaneous consideration to various key items which required lengthy consultations. Such an arrangement would pose problems for the smaller delegations in particular. Furthermore, the dates scheduled for the consideration of certain very complex items would not give delegations sufficient time for proper preparation. Consideration of certain other items had been postponed in light of the expected date of issue of the documentation and in those cases, the Committee would have difficulty considering those items with the proper thoroughness. The Bureau of the Fifth Committee should try to modify the schedule of work, bearing in mind the political importance of the items along with certain practical considerations, and should publish a revised version of document A/C.5/44/L.1.

18. With respect to the Chairman's proposal that regional groups should submit their positions on specific issues to the Bureau, in writing, so that the Bureau might prepare a compromise text, the idea was interesting in theory, but it could present some problems in practice. For example, it would have to be determined what language those documents would be submitted in and whether the regional groups would have at their disposal conference services for the preparation and translation of the documents. Otherwise the entire responsibility would fall to the regional groups, some of which would find the task very difficult. Thus, the proposal could only be a recommendation to, not an obligation for, all regional groups.

19. Mr. GUPTA (India) endorsed some of the remarks made by the representative of the Soviet Union with respect to the availability of documents and the amount of time allotted by the Committee in recent years to the consideration of certain items. With regard to the current session, the documentation corresponding to some of the items whose consideration was scheduled for the beginning of the session had yet to be issued; that was true, for example, of the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, which served as the basis for

(Mr. Gupta, India)

the consideration of the financial reports (item 121); it was also true of the report of the Committee on Conferences. That situation was an obstacle to in-depth consideration of the items. He suggested that the Committee should postpone consideration of those items in respect of which documentation was not yet available and should move ahead with those items in respect of which documentation had been issued in good time. It was also to be hoped that item 40, concerning the current financial crisis of the United Nations, could be given thorough consideration, in contrast to what had happened at the previous session when the documentation had been issued near the end of the session, making it impossible to analyse the matter in detail. Echoing the representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, he requested that the schedule of work should be reconsidered at a later meeting.

20. Mr. LADJOUZI (Algeria) said that in the past the delay in issuance of the documents had not prevented the Committee from carrying out its work properly. The reason for the delay was well known; in preparing the programme of work, the Chairman had taken into account both that factor and the availability of the individuals scheduled to introduce the reports. That was all he could do. The programme proposed by the Chairman was acceptable; at the same time, the Committee would have to demonstrate its customary flexibility; appropriate modifications could be introduced as the debate and consultations at the Committee level progressed, as had been the practice to date.

21. With respect to the organization of work, he said that if significant modifications were to be made to the proposed programme, it would be preferable if they were submitted in writing; since other documents which were not necessarily included in the report on the status of documentation (A/C.5/44/L.1), would be issued during the Committee's session, it would be worthwhile issuing, at a later stage, a summary of documents issued and submitted to the Committee for consideration; since the holding of more than one meeting at a time would give rise to problems for delegations consisting of a single representative, they should be avoided; finally, with respect to the proposed consultations of regional groups, the issue of language would not be a problem since in that type of meeting the working language was usually English. He strongly supported the Chairman's proposal which, linked to the mechanisms that already existed in the Committee, would enable the Committee to improve its work.

22. Mr. VAHER (Canada) said that his delegation appreciated the efforts of the Chairman to speed up the Committee's work and would make every effort to support him in that task. It further appreciated the introduction of innovations in the working methods, which in the long run would serve to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Committee.

23. His delegation supported the remarks of the representative of the USSR with respect to the availability of documents and the dates chosen for the consideration of the various items. While it would join in the consensus with regard to the programme of work, his delegation believed that the Committee should not consider an item until members had had an opportunity to study the relevant documentation.

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(Mr. Vaheer, Canada)

In preparing the documentation, the Secretariat should bear in mind the schedule for the consideration of items.

24. With regard to the proposal that regional groups should meet and submit their views, in writing, to the Bureau, he shared the concerns of other delegations with respect to the language in which those opinions would be written and the possible need for translation services. Another concern was the fact that the group of Western European and other States, to which his country belonged, existed solely for the purpose of elections and therefore would not be able to submit a joint opinion on any substantive issue. Thus, his delegation preferred to maintain the traditional system for the elaboration of resolutions, namely, a general debate followed by informal consultations presided over by the Chairman or an individual designated by him. That method had been successful, was viable under the circumstances and would avoid some of the difficulties involved in requesting regional groups, which might not be in a position to do so, to submit opinions on substantive issues.

25. The CHAIRMAN once again pointed out that in the preparation of the programme of work account had been taken of all available information on the status of documentation. The question of the availability of documents was a perennial problem and the Committee could perhaps consider it and find a better solution.

26. The proposed meetings of the regional groups would serve to reach agreement and prevent wasting time in a repetition of the same views in official and informal meetings. Furthermore, in practice the regional groups adopted specific positions in advance on all the items submitted to the General Assembly and consultations were usually conducted on a regional basis. The regional groups should now directly assume their responsibility. The language would not be a problem since, as was currently the case in consultation meetings, documents could be submitted only in English.

27. During the previous year, in spite of all the efforts made, much time had been lost and only 51 official meetings had been held. If the time was used properly, the work could be completed in the allotted period in 1989. He did not, however, wish to impose his suggestion and would welcome any other suggestion for speeding up the work of the Committee.

28. Mr. WYZNER (Under-Secretary-General for Conference Services and Special Assignments), responding to the concerns expressed by delegations about the availability of documentation, said that the Department of Conference Services had received only about 8,500 pages of a total of 14,000 pages of pre-sessional documentation for the various bodies of the General Assembly, or less than two thirds of the documentation which it had to process. That was the general situation and the Fifth Committee was no exception; furthermore, everyone was aware of the financial crisis and budgetary constraints facing the Organization. In any event, the main task was to co-ordinate the programme of work with the availability of documentation, and that to a great extent had been done.

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(Mr. Wyzner)

29. Responding to the comment made by the representative of the Soviet Union concerning the report of the International Civil Service Commission, he said that Volume I of the report had been received only the previous week and that Volume II had been received unedited for advance translation and was still subject to changes.
30. Mr. DANKWA (Ghana) said that, in his opinion, the various proposals put forward by delegations had been made in order to enhance the effectiveness of the work of the Committee and make best possible use of time; that was also applied to the suggestions made by the Chairman.
31. There had been repeated complaints that not all the necessary documentation was available on time; nevertheless, delegations should expect that situation to continue for some time and should view it realistically. The programme of work submitted to the Committee was an initiative which should be taken into account; the Committee should take note of the programme of work on the understanding that it was subject to changes and adjustments.
32. Referring to the suggestion by the Chairman that the Committee's work should be conducted on the basis of regional groups, his delegation took the view that that was a suggestion and not a decision imposed on the Committee, and that the suggestion had been made in order to speed up the Committee's work and ensure that it was carried out in an orderly manner. Of course, the holding of informal meetings should not be ruled out.
33. The CHAIRMAN said that it should in no way be assumed that the programme of work was rigid and stressed that flexibility was essential. The programme of work had been conceived as a set of guidelines based mainly on the availability of documentation and would be subject to constant review in order to obtain the best results. In that regard, many constructive and useful proposals which would enable the Committee to remain flexible and adapt to circumstances had already been made during the current session.
34. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee took note of the programme of work and adopted it subject to subsequent changes which might be necessary.
35. It was so decided.
36. Mr. NASSER (Egypt), referring to document A/C.5/44/L.1, on the status of the documentation of the Committee, asked why the reports of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) were cited in connection with two items, namely item 123 on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1990-1991, and item 127, on the Joint Inspection Unit.
37. Mr. GOMEZ (Acting Under-Secretary-General, Department of Administration and Management) explained that, in addition to being considered in connection with item 127, the JIU reports were regarded as background documents for the consideration of various sections of the proposed programme budget. Therefore, in view of the wishes of the Committee, the relevant JIU reports were included for the consideration of the proposed programme budget.

AGENDA ITEM 17: APPOINTMENTS TO FILL VACANCIES IN SUBSIDIARY ORGANS AND OTHER APPOINTMENTS (A/44/101/Add.1)

(a) APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY QUESTIONS

38. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee should propose a candidate to the General Assembly to fill the vacancy on the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions resulting from the resignation of Mr. Richard Nygard (United States of America). The person elected would occupy the post for the remainder of the term of office of Mr. Nygard, namely until 31 December 1990.

39. The Government of the United States of America had nominated Mr. John Fox to fill the vacancy. If there were no objections, he would take it that the Committee wished to dispense with a secret ballot and recommend by acclamation the appointment of Mr. John Fox as a member of the Advisory Committee until 31 December 1990.

40. It was so decided.

41. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee authorized the Rapporteur to submit the report of the Committee on the sub-item to the General Assembly.

42. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.