



# General Assembly

Sixty-eighth session

Official Records

Distr.: General  
11 November 2013

Original: English

---

## Fifth Committee

### Summary record of the 15th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 6 November 2013, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Taalas ..... (Finland)  
*Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative  
and Budgetary Questions:* Mr. Ruiz Massieu

## Contents

Agenda item 137: Pattern of conferences

---

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent as soon as possible, under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, to the Chief of the Documents Control Unit (srcorrections@un.org), and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org/>).

13-55022 (E)



Please recycle



*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

**Agenda item 137: Pattern of conferences (A/68/32, 122, 123 and 567)**

1. **Ms. Rambukwella** (Chair of the Committee on Conferences), introducing the report of the Committee on Conferences for 2013 (A/68/32), said that the report contained a draft resolution on the pattern of conferences and a draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings for 2014 and 2015, which were recommended for adoption by the General Assembly. The Committee on Conferences had considered the report of the Secretary-General on the pattern of conferences (A/68/122), which had been issued within the mandated time frame and was within the word limit for reports originating in the Secretariat. The report of the Committee on Conferences offered a comprehensive summary of the discussions held during its substantive session, which had again been conducted in a paper-smart fashion, with all documents posted on a dedicated website, and laptops, technical support and print-on-demand services provided by the Secretariat.

2. The annual substantive session offered Member States an opportunity to engage with the senior management of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management with a view to providing guidance and support to the Secretariat in carrying out its mandate. In 2013, two Committee members from the Latin American and Caribbean States were still to be appointed.

3. The Committee on Conferences had reviewed the statistical data on the utilization of conference-servicing resources and facilities at the four duty stations and at the conference centre of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). In addition, she had reported on her mandate to hold consultations with the three intergovernmental bodies whose utilization factor had fallen below the 80 per cent benchmark over the previous three consecutive years, from 2010 to 2012: the Committee on Information, the Committee on Contributions and the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund. As a result of those efforts, the bodies had tentatively agreed to reduce the length of their meetings, reduce the number of meetings scheduled, in accordance with their needs, or provide advance notice of meeting cancellations.

4. Pursuant to section II, paragraph 17, of General Assembly resolution 66/233, the Secretary-General's report provided the utilization factor over a period of 10 years for those intergovernmental bodies that had consistently underutilized conference resources. The Committee on Conferences had considered the Secretary-General's specific suggestions on measures to improve the utilization factor of those bodies at its substantive session. While delegations had agreed to urge those intergovernmental bodies to take their utilization factor into account when planning their future sessions in order to achieve the benchmark, some delegations had insisted that more practical measures to reduce the costs of conference servicing, such as planning fewer meetings and shortening the duration of meetings, should be considered. Given the lack of agreement on specific language to add to General Assembly resolution 67/237, the Committee on Conferences had decided to refer the issue to the Fifth Committee for its consideration. Concern had also been expressed about the recurring underutilization of the ECA conference centre, and the Secretary-General was requested to continue to explore additional means to increase its utilization, including with its partners such as the African Union.

5. With regard to the capital master plan, the Committee on Conferences had noted with concern that several problems had been encountered in the newly renovated conference rooms, and had decided to refer the issue to the Fifth Committee for its consideration. On integrated global management, in its draft resolution, the Committee on Conferences reiterated its request to the Secretary-General to redouble his efforts to include in his next report on the pattern of conferences information regarding the financial savings achieved through the implementation of the integrated global management projects. The Committee on Conferences had not agreed on a proposal to request the Secretary-General to propose ways to enhance the system of assessment of the quality of conferences services provided and had decided to refer the issue to the Fifth Committee for its consideration.

6. Several delegations remained concerned about the late issuance of documents for the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly, and had suggested adjusting the wording of the draft resolution in order to improve timely submission. With regard to PaperSmart, the Committee on Conferences had reached consensus that the concept should be further developed within existing

resources. However, some delegations supported endorsement of the concept, while others preferred to continue it on a trial basis only. The Committee had decided to refer the issue to the Fifth Committee for its consideration.

7. The Committee on Conferences requested the Secretary-General to make further concerted efforts to promote outreach through, inter alia, traineeships and internships, and to introduce innovative methods to increase awareness of the programmes, including through partnerships with Member States, relevant international organizations and language institutions in all regions, but in particular Africa and Latin America. In addition, it reiterated its request to the Secretary-General to provide at all duty stations adequate staff at the appropriate level, with a view to ensuring appropriate quality control for contractual translation, with due consideration of the principle of equal grade for equal work.

8. The Committee on Conferences had not agreed on a proposal by one delegation that the Secretary-General should report to the General Assembly on the criteria used to determine which documents would be translated by staff members and which by external contractors, and had decided to refer the issue to the Fifth Committee for its consideration.

9. **Mr. Gettu** (Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the pattern of conferences (A/68/122) and the report on the PaperSmart concept (A/68/123), said that the draft resolution contained in the report of the Committee on Conferences for 2013 (A/68/32) provided important guidelines for the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management and he hoped that the Committee would adopt it.

10. With regard to integrated global management, it was necessary to delineate lines of responsibility between the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management and the Directors-General of the United Nations Offices at Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi in respect of conference management policies, operations and resource utilization. Progress was being made in reaching a common understanding on the integrated and effective conference management of the future, which included global management of common financial and human resources based on a unified technological platform,

common performance indicators and standard operating procedures. The related changes would be discussed with all concerned at the four duty stations and in other Secretariat departments with a view to reporting results to the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session.

11. Document processing had advanced as technology was leveraged to support changing work processes. Teams at the four duty stations were working together to develop the global conference management system, and the gDoc and gText projects would allow harmonization of translation and related processes, greater work-sharing and the implementation of common information and communications technology standards.

12. The global workforce of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management included both internal staff and external qualified language professionals, and its ability to obtain rapid external assistance was critical to the timely issuance of documents. Outreach and training activities were required to improve the Organization's capacity to attract qualified language professionals, since it was not a buyer's market for language services. He therefore welcomed the guidance on the matter contained in the draft resolution recommended by the Committee on Conferences.

13. The report on PaperSmart reviewed the progress made in implementing the concept. To date, the Department had serviced more than 500 official meetings using PaperSmart, and the lessons learned during that trial phase would be carefully analysed in order to continue improving the tool. PaperSmart would not eliminate access to hard copies; rather it would mark a shift from printing by default to printing on demand. The concept would be developed further within existing resources, and more work would be done to ensure that the portal was fully multilingual.

14. He had noted the concern expressed by the Advisory Committee that the anticipated lengthy digitization project of United Nations documents might jeopardize the retention of historical knowledge and information in view of the delicate physical condition of many of the documents. He hoped that it might be possible to use the project creatively to accommodate staff members whose posts would be abolished if the budget proposal for section 2 was approved.

15. The Department's policy had always been to ensure that the quality of translated documents fully complied with United Nations standards regardless of whether those documents were translated in-house or externally. However, efforts were being made to enhance and standardize quality assurance of contractual translation. Documents translated externally were assigned to contractors with subject-specific skills and were systematically spot-checked by senior revisers, and implementation of gText would further improve the quality of external translation by providing contractors with access to a single, integrated system of translation tools and terminology.

16. Outreach and training were also important in improving the quality of contractual translation, and the Department was considering new approaches to attract and train a pool of young language professionals, which included mentoring arrangements involving students and in-house revisers, as well as an expanded language internship programme. Efforts to expand the pool of professionals qualified to provide contractual translation would also foster the economical use of resources.

17. The Department had noted the concerns expressed about the late issuance of documents. For the sixty-eighth session, 87 per cent of Fifth Committee documents had been submitted to the Department by authors for processing in a timely manner compared with 62 per cent at the sixty-seventh session. While there was room for improvement in author departments, planning documentation was also a challenge for the Department. Reasons for that included the unavailability in advance of the programmes of work of the Fifth Committee and the Advisory Committee and their lack of synchronization. Processing priority was given to Fifth Committee documents, but some documents had still not met the six-week issuance benchmark owing to slippage within the Department. He took full responsibility for the delay in processing several key documents, including the first report of the Advisory Committee on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015 (A/68/7) and the reports of the Board of Auditors. The Department had taken immediate action as soon as the problem had become apparent; it had examined the reasons for the delays and was applying the lessons learned in order to do better in future.

18. The Department was working to schedule Fifth Committee documentation with greater accuracy and to

reduce the length of documents originating in the Department of Management. It would also continue to mobilize resources from all four duty stations to ensure the timeliness of the most sensitive documents. The Department had previously requested a change in the historical pattern of documentation processing, which allowed only four weeks for editing, translation and related tasks, while Member States had six weeks to review issued documents. That pattern assumed that documents needed to be physically shipped to national capitals, which was no longer the case in the age of electronic communication. Given that two additional weeks for processing would improve efficiency, the proposal would be reiterated in the Secretary-General's report on the pattern of conferences submitted to the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

19. The volume of documentation coming from the Human Rights Council, its subsidiary machinery and the human rights treaty bodies was another major challenge for the Department. As part of the treaty body reform process, discussions were being held on changing conference services in accordance with Member States' priorities, and the Department might need to realign its workload processing capacity and introduce work-sharing in order to match demand with capacity.

20. **Mr. Obama** (Vice-Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the report of the Advisory Committee on the pattern of conferences (A/68/567), said that the Advisory Committee was concerned that, despite the efforts made, 10 intergovernmental bodies had an average utilization factor over the previous ten years below the benchmark of 80 per cent. It therefore looked forward to substantial and sustainable improvements in that regard in the year ahead.

21. It also regretted that, despite a marketing strategy and local and international appeals, the utilization rate of the ECA conference centre had decreased from 76 per cent in 2009 to 62 per cent in 2012. The Advisory Committee was concerned about the sustainability and viability of the centre, and considered that the 50-50 formula for income generation and costs should also include indirect costs in order to ensure full costing and risk assessment. It recommended that the General Assembly should keep the matter under close review and requested the Secretary-General to present alternative options for the

future if the underutilization trend was not noticeably reversed during the 2014-2015 biennium.

22. The Advisory Committee welcomed the plans to delineate lines of responsibility between the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management and the Directors General of the United Nations Offices at Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi for conference management policies, operations and resource utilization by the end of 2013, and requested that a status update should be provided to the General Assembly at the current session.

23. Regarding documents management, the Advisory Committee welcomed the efforts made thus far to improve the timeliness of document submission in Nairobi but regretted that overall compliance rates had remained below the target. In his next report on the pattern of conferences, the Secretary-General should present specific remedial measures for reversing that situation. The Advisory Committee trusted that efforts would continue to be made to ensure the timely issuance of documents in order to allow Member States adequate time to prepare for scheduled meetings, and requested that measures to that end should be detailed in the next report on the pattern of conferences. Lastly, the Advisory Committee recognized that the PaperSmart concept had the potential to achieve greater transparency, more efficient and effective document dissemination and more reliable information flow, but stressed the importance of making available paper documents, as needed. The Advisory Committee recommended that the Secretary-General should be requested to include an update on the ongoing implementation of the concept in the next report on the pattern of conferences.

24. **Mr. Thomson** (Fiji), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group welcomed the recommendations and the draft resolution contained in the report of the Committee on Conferences (A/68/32). The Group attached great importance to the effective delivery of quality conference services, including the equal treatment of the six official languages, since those services were critical to the functioning of the United Nations.

25. While the Secretary-General's report on the pattern of conferences (A/68/122) indicated that the overall utilization factor for conference facilities in all four duty stations had remained constant, the Group was concerned that the utilization factor of New York

had fallen to 79 per cent in 2012, and that three intergovernmental bodies in New York had recorded utilization factors below the benchmark of 80 per cent for three consecutive years. The Group welcomed the efforts made by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management and the Committee on Conferences to improve utilization rates, but further efforts were needed. The Group remained concerned at the decrease in the utilization rate of the conference centre at ECA. It welcomed the efforts made to reverse that trend and remained convinced that innovative strategies and ongoing improvements to the centre's facilities would improve its utilization rate.

26. With regard to the use of the proximity rule to achieve the most efficient servicing package for meetings held away from the relevant headquarters, the Group agreed with the Advisory Committee on the need for a breakdown of the actual savings achieved in 2012 under the regular budget by using that rule. The Group noted that the proximity rule included minimizing travel costs by closest proximity and supported the development of more suitable terminology that included all the factors that were taken into consideration when applying the rule.

27. The Group attached great importance to preserving historic United Nations documents. The anticipated time for digitizing those documents might jeopardize the retention of historical knowledge and, in view of the delicate state of the documents, their digitization should therefore be a priority and the Secretary-General should look for ways to accelerate that process.

28. Timely issuance of quality documents was essential for effective deliberations of intergovernmental bodies and the Committee. The Group noted that, for the main part of the Committee's deliberations during the sixty-seventh session, 26 documents had been issued less than two weeks before the respective meeting, including the Advisory Committee's first report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015 (A/68/7). Such delays were unacceptable and put Member States under pressure in completing their work. While efficiencies should be pursued, translation capacity must be sufficient to allow documents to be issued on time, and the Group wished to know what steps the Secretary-General would take to resolve that perennial problem.

29. With regard to PaperSmart, paper documents should be made available, as needed, and the Group would continue to seek clarification of the implications for such issues as human resources, finances, potential effects on the proceedings of the intergovernmental bodies, the transfer of costs to Member States, and the technological gap between developed and developing countries.

30. Given the importance of quality translation and interpretation, the Group was keen to know the exact criteria used to determine whether a document should be translated by in-house staff, short-term staff or contractors, as well as the measures used to review the quality of work carried out by contractors. The Group was seriously concerned that the consolidated lists of individuals and entities subject to Security Council sanctions had not yet been translated into all six official languages despite the existence of mandates to do so.

31. The Group reiterated the importance of adhering to the guidelines and procedures contained in the administrative instructions for the authorization of the use of United Nations premises for meetings, conferences, special events and exhibits by Member States and the Secretariat, and emphasized that such activities must be consistent with the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

32. **Mr. Cumberbatch** (Cuba), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that the quality of Member States' deliberations was dependent on the timely distribution of documents, and that CELAC was concerned at the continued and constant delays in the issuance of documentation. The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management was clearly responsible for the delay in issuing the Advisory Committee's first report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015 (A/68/7), and the Secretary-General was urged to provide an explanation for that delay, as well as information about the measures that would be implemented to prevent that perennial problem.

33. Two memorandums of understanding had been signed between the Organization and Spanish-language universities in order to strengthen the training of language professionals and improve the recruitment of qualified staff, and Spanish-speaking Member States should promote the signing of additional

memorandums. CELAC was deeply concerned about the quality of reports, some of which showed a lack of serious quality control of translation, and stressed that any savings and/or efficiencies arising from the increased use of contractual translation must not come at the expense of quality and timeliness of services. In view of the push for greater use of contractors, it would seek detailed information about quality control for external translations.

34. With regard to the trial of PaperSmart, CELAC sought information about the costs and implications for the Organization and Member States, taking into account technological gaps, and requested the Secretary-General in the meantime to continue providing paper copies of documents in a timely manner in accordance with established mandates. Lastly, CELAC welcomed the establishment of the Group of Friends of Spanish at the United Nations, whose purpose was to promote the use of the Spanish language in the work of the United Nations and respect for multilingualism.

35. **Mr. Velásquez** (Peru) said that the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management must be allocated sufficient resources to carry out the mandates approved by Member States, and that cutting the budget for the next biennium by a further \$100 million would be extremely difficult. In addition, approving new mandates without increasing the Department's budget would only impede its work.

36. His delegation was very concerned at the repeated delays in the submission of documents to the Fifth Committee and at the failure to translate the Advisory Committee's first report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015 into all official languages in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. Priority should be given to the Advisory Committee's reports and the Secretary-General should ensure that the necessary resources were allocated for that purpose.

37. His delegation was also concerned that the Security Council sanctions lists were prepared only in English. The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management should be provided with the resources necessary to prepare those lists in all official languages in accordance with the relevant mandate. With regard to contractual translation, his delegation was concerned about the criteria used to select documents for outsourcing and the quality control

methods used. It understood that, with the exception of Security Council and Fifth Committee documents, other documents were outsourced depending on the workload and that quality control was based on random spot checks. The Documentation Division could not carry out its work efficiently if staff numbers continued to be reduced. The mandates relating to the issuance of documents on time in the six official languages were not being fulfilled, and his delegation would not support cuts that had a direct impact on their implementation.

38. Implementation of the PaperSmart concept should be gradual. For the time being, his delegation therefore supported its introduction on a trial basis only. Lastly, his delegation welcomed the establishment of the Group of Friends of Spanish at the United Nations.

39. **Mr. Dalo** (Argentina) said that his country supported all initiatives designed to optimize conference services, including improvements in translation and interpretation services in the six official languages on an equal basis. Timely issuance of documents, especially those of the Fifth Committee, was vital, as it enabled delegations to analyse them properly in advance of negotiations. The Secretariat should therefore take steps to resolve the perennial problem of late issuance of documents.

40. His delegation welcomed the establishment of the Group of Friends of Spanish at the United Nations as a tool to strengthen the use of the Spanish language and multilingualism in United Nations activities. The Group was concerned at the poor quality of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) website, which had been translated by external translators. The quality controls in place for contractual translation were inadequate given that checks were random and were carried out only after documents had been published. The necessary resources should be allocated to improve quality control for external translations, and any savings and/or efficiencies arising from the increased use of contractual translation must not come at the expense of quality and timeliness of services.

41. His delegation was also concerned that the consolidated lists of the Security Council's sanctions committees had not been translated into the six official languages, since that hindered their incorporation into national legislation. In particular, it was deeply concerned that, despite the repeated requests of the

General Assembly, the Al-Qaida Sanctions List and the list relating to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) had not been translated into the six official languages. That situation should be resolved as soon as possible in accordance with the relevant mandate.

42. The PaperSmart initiative could improve transparency and efficiency and was environmentally friendly. However, ongoing analysis of the consequences of the concept was needed, taking into account technological gaps between countries. In addition, hard copies of documents were required in some cases, including in United Nations depository libraries, which played a vital role in disseminating information to regions that lacked the material and technological capacities to manage electronic documents.

43. **Mr. Onuma** (Japan) said that maintaining the quality of conference services was essential for proper decision-making by Member States. The Secretariat should nevertheless continue to seek efficiencies through cost-saving measures, while Member States should refrain from adding unnecessary conference services when deciding on the modalities of new meetings. The PaperSmart concept should be promoted as a way to enhance efficiencies and reduce the total cost of conference services.

44. His delegation welcomed initiatives to increase conference-servicing utilization rates, but more concrete and practical measures should be implemented to reduce the cost of conference services, including planning fewer meetings and shortening their duration. With regard to integrated global management, Japan firmly supported efforts to realize further savings by means of the proximity rule, which should be applied more rigorously. On the subject of translation and interpretation, his country was concerned that the Secretariat had made changes to the agreed texts of both draft and adopted resolutions beyond purely grammatical and editorial points of view, since the Secretariat had no power to make changes of a substantive nature to the texts agreed upon by Member States.

45. **Mr. Ngoulou** (Congo) said that his delegation was deeply concerned about the rise in the percentage of meetings cancelled by intergovernmental bodies, which was a waste of resources and made it difficult to monitor implementation of mandates. However, it

appreciated the Secretariat's efforts to use the conference services of the four duty stations, which had recorded an overall utilization factor of 84 per cent in 2012. It also noted with satisfaction that all meetings of Nairobi-based bodies had been held in Nairobi in accordance with the headquarters rule.

46. His delegation was concerned at the recurring underutilization of the conference centre at ECA and urged the Secretary-General to ensure that measures were implemented to deal with the increasing competition in Addis Ababa. It was also concerned at the persistent failures encountered in the recently renovated conference rooms in New York, given that conference services should be provided with adequate support to ensure their seamless operation throughout the implementation of the capital master plan in accordance with General Assembly resolution 67/237. The Secretariat was also encouraged to ensure proper functioning of the gDoc global document management system and the gText project in order to guarantee improvements in the quality of translated United Nations documents. In addition, the clear delineation of responsibility between the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management and the Directors General of the United Nations Offices at Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi would enable the latter to carry out their mandates fully.

47. It was regrettable that some initiatives implemented at duty stations, such as telecommuting, were not mentioned in the two reports of the Secretary-General, since those omissions did not reflect the reality on the ground and prevented delegations from engaging in informed deliberations. With regard to the issuance of documents, although the rates of documents submitted on time were satisfactory in New York and Geneva, efforts were needed to improve the situation in Nairobi and Vienna, where rates were very low. His delegation was concerned at the late issuance of numerous reports in the Organization's six official languages during the current session. It also urged the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management to continue digitizing important historical documents.

48. Like most developing countries, Congo lacked the technology required to use the PaperSmart concept, and it urged the Secretariat to continue testing the system before its full-scale introduction. His delegation welcomed the programme established by the Department for General Assembly and Conference

Management to collaborate with universities in the area of translation and interpretation, and urged it to organize regular recruitment competitions for language staff taking into account needs on the ground and available resources. In particular, it was keen to implement the training project for African language staff. Lastly, it urged the Department to establish partnerships with African universities to serve as centres of excellence for staff recruitment.

49. **Mr. Bame** (Ethiopia) said that his delegation welcomed the personal efforts of the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa to encourage the United Nations country team to consider the ECA conference centre as the first option for its meetings in order to increase the utilization rate, and urged him to make a similar plea to diplomats and development partners working in Ethiopia. It looked forward to the completion of the study of the pricing and marketing structure of the centre, which should result in competitive conference packages and an improved utilization rate.

50. While recognizing the efforts to reverse the underutilization of the conference centre, his delegation remained concerned at the continuing and significant decline in the utilization rate. The Secretary-General should therefore redouble his efforts to provide alternative options to address the chronic underutilization of the centre, which could be the result of competition from other conference facilities in Addis Ababa. Since the ECA conference centre's pricing was already low, innovative approaches were needed to ensure greater use of the centre.

51. **Mr. Kalugin** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation supported initiatives designed to improve the management of resources allocated to conference services and enhance integrated global management at all duty stations. It also welcomed the signing of memorandums of understanding with language institutes and the organization of in-house traineeships for young professionals and their recruitment to translation and interpretation services.

52. Special caution should be exercised when reforming the methods of work of the language services. Those services were unique and the main goal of the reform should be to enhance the quality of interpretation and translation in all six official languages. The quality of United Nations conference servicing was largely dependent on the language



services being provided with equally favourable working conditions and the availability of the necessary human and financial resources, as provided for in the most recent General Assembly resolution on multilingualism.

53. The Secretariat should continue working to ensure the transfer of knowledge from senior to junior staff in language areas. In that regard, his delegation supported continuation of the practice of employing temporary assistance, including freelancers recruited on an international basis, especially for translation services with unfilled posts.

54. With regard to PaperSmart, his delegation had no objection to digital access to information for delegates, but balanced implementation of that initiative was important, since not all delegates had access to modern digital resources. Paper copies should still be issued, as required, and written meeting records should continue to be provided.

55. His delegation was concerned at the plans of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management to replace traditional proofreading done by specifically trained staff with computer software programs, since that could have a negative impact on the quality of documents issued. Above all, it was important to ensure that there was no reduction in the quality and range of conference services. To that end, the financial and organizational consequences of the initiatives proposed should be analysed in detail.

56. **Mr. Lieberman** (United States of America) said that his delegation firmly supported the PaperSmart concept, which should be endorsed by the General Assembly, but it nonetheless acknowledged that safeguards and accountability measures were needed. PaperSmart enhanced transparency and accessibility and saved taxpayers money. The electronic portal provided access to documents in real time and reflected a business practice that had been used in the private sector for many years.

57. PaperSmart had also drastically reduced the amount of paper used by the United Nations each year, which had saved money and helped protect the environment. The output of the printing operation of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management had decreased from 300 million page impressions in 2009 to 40 million in 2012, while the budget of the Meetings and Publishing Division in New York had decreased from \$103.05 million in

2010-2011 to \$97.65 million in the 2012-2013 biennium. PaperSmart had not only been implemented within existing resources, but had also resulted in cost savings.

58. PaperSmart did not mean paperless and one of the guiding principles of PaperSmart was to ensure that paper copies were always available. His delegation firmly supported the continued availability of paper documents, including the guarantee that Member States would have the same access to hard copies that they had always had. However, if fewer requests were made for paper copies, efficiency would improve and the Organization's carbon footprint would continue to shrink.

59. The PaperSmart initiative had been well managed and well implemented, but had been introduced on a trial basis only. The system might not be perfect but it was effective, and the United States was ready to engage in constructive discussions on delegations' concerns. It called on Member States to give the Secretary-General the authority to advance the project within existing resources.

60. **Ms. Diaz** (Philippines) said that, with regard to the utilization of conference-servicing resources and facilities, her delegation was concerned that the overall utilization factor for meetings at all four duty stations in 2012 had been 84 per cent and 79 per cent in New York, and that five intergovernmental bodies had recorded an average utilization factor over the previous 10 years that remained below the benchmark of 80 per cent and had shown no improvement in 2012. However, it acknowledged that the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management had made suggestions to those bodies to improve their utilization rates and had urged them to base their requests for planned meetings on actual utilization and to give timely notification of cancellations. Those simple measures would greatly improve overall efficiency in the use of conferencing resources.

61. Her delegation looked forward to the Secretary-General's report on integrated global management and how the separate production chains of the four duty stations could be integrated into a coherent and complementary global operation, taking into consideration the delineation of responsibilities and accountabilities. Her delegation was interested to know how the Flextime system related to the 2003 Secretary-General's bulletin on flexible working arrangements,

and sought further information on the pilot telecommuting arrangement for two regular staff translators who were employed by the United Nations Office at Nairobi but worked from Argentina. That situation should be analysed in view of its impact on human resources policies and the efficiencies that could be gained through alternative service contract arrangements that could reduce post-related costs.

62. While PaperSmart had resulted in acknowledged the savings made and had received satisfactory feedback from end users, her delegation was concerned about the failure of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management to meet its commitment to provide on-demand printing services. It therefore sought more detailed information on the human resources and financial implications of the concept.

63. **Mr. Furno** (France), speaking on a point of order, said that all documents should be distributed in a timely manner in the six official languages in accordance with the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. It was therefore regrettable that all documents concerning the pattern of conferences had not been available until just one day before they were to be taken up, since such practices hindered the full participation of Member States in intergovernmental processes. The issuance of so-called preliminary versions was contrary to the principle of simultaneous distribution of documents in all languages. His delegation did not wish to delay consideration of that agenda item, but it urged the Secretariat to identify the causes of the delay and to take the necessary steps to ensure that Member States had the documents required for decision-making.

64. **Mr. Gettu** (Under-Secretary General for General Assembly and Conference Management) said that staff members were doing their utmost to serve the Organization efficiently, and the delays in the issuance of documents had arisen for various reasons. The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management had accepted responsibility for its errors and had devised immediate solutions. Staff in Nairobi, Geneva, Vienna and New York had been mobilized to deliver the documents quickly, and the Department was working systematically to ensure that the same problems did not arise again. He had held a series of meetings and would report to the Secretary-General on progress made in implementing his short- and long-term strategy.

65. With regard to the quality of translation, especially contractual translation, work was outsourced to individuals with specific skills to ensure high quality, and spot checks were systematically carried out by senior in-house revisers. In addition, the implementation of gText would provide contractual translators with electronic resources to assist them in their work. The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management had had no involvement in the translation of the documents on the website of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to which several delegations had referred and could not therefore accept responsibility for the quality of that content. Outreach and training activities were being carried out to attract qualified language professionals and improve the quality of translations.

66. The PaperSmart initiative was sensitive to the needs of all Member States, and nobody would be denied a hard copy on demand. In total, 500 official meetings had been conducted with PaperSmart and the problems that had arisen had been analysed and solved. PaperSmart reflected changes in the world of conference servicing and offered benefits in terms of accessibility and availability of documents, paper consumption and cost savings. While some countries were not ready to use PaperSmart, others wished to use it, and the needs of both were accommodated. He therefore urged the Committee to move forward with the concept.

67. With regard to documents management, concerted efforts were being made to ensure that documents were managed efficiently. Concrete proposals were being discussed relating to the delineation of responsibilities, and he had held discussions with the Directors General at the different duty stations on such issues as common financial activities and unified technology usage. He would report back to the Committee on progress made in those areas. Lastly, technology was being leveraged to allow work-sharing in translation, improved quality control and the provision of services in the context of integrated global management.

*The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.*