



General Assembly

Sixty-eighth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
18 August 2014

Original: English

Fourth Committee

Summary record of the 27th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 18 June 2014, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Motanyane (Lesotho)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Agenda item 5: Election of the officers of the Main Committees

1. **The Chair** said that, in accordance with rule 99 (a) of the rules of procedure, the meeting had been convened for the purpose of electing the Chair and other members of the Bureau for the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

2. The nomination of Mr. Bhattarai (Nepal) for the office of Chair had been endorsed by the Group of Asia-Pacific States. In the absence of further nominations, and in accordance with rule 103 of the rules of procedure, he would take it that the Committee wished to elect Mr. Bhattarai (Nepal) Chair.

3. *Mr. Bhattarai (Nepal) was elected Chair by acclamation.*

4. **The Chair** said that the nominations of Mr. Amihai (Israel) and Ms. Freimane-Deksne (Latvia) for two of the three offices of Vice-Chair had been endorsed by the Group of Western European and Other States and the Group of Eastern European States, respectively, and that the nomination of Mr. Orellana Zabalza (Guatemala) for the office of Rapporteur had been endorsed by the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States. The election of the remaining Vice-Chair would be held at a later date.

5. **Ms. Al-Thani** (Qatar), speaking on behalf of the Group of Arab States, said that the Group had sent letters to the Chair protesting the endorsement by the Group of Western European and Other States of a candidate from Israel for the office of Vice-Chair; regrettably, no other candidate had been endorsed. The Group of Arab States therefore requested that the election should be conducted by secret ballot, in accordance with rule 103 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, allowing it to record its rejection of the nomination and prevent the Israeli candidate from being elected by consensus.

6. **Mr. Prozor** (Israel) said that the challenge to the candidate whose nomination had been endorsed by the Group of Western European and Other States constituted an assault on the rules and norms of the United Nations. Delegations should reflect on the implications of the vote and on whether it served the interests of the General Assembly or undermined the ideas on which the United Nations was built. Did it

advance the collective interests of the international community or the hate-fuelled politics of a small group of nations?

7. In its letter of explanation the Group of Arab States had presented a series of unfounded claims. By questioning the eligibility of an Israeli candidate to serve as Vice-Chair, it was opposing all of the Western European and other States. The nations offering such so-called guidance to the rest of the world were none other than the Islamic Republic of Iran, Saudi Arabia and the Syrian Arab Republic, the champions of terrorism and human rights violations, which had the audacity to point fingers and impose their warped standards on regional groups. When it came to opposing the real criminals in the international community, the Group of Arab States remained silent. Its members had made no objection to the election to the Bureau of the First Committee of a candidate from the Islamic Republic of Iran, a State which supported terrorism and was actively developing nuclear weapons; if they were truly concerned about the credibility of officers of the Committee, they should reconsider their own candidates to General Assembly bodies. He assumed that, since members of the Group of Arab States routinely abused their own legal systems, their representatives would no longer be able to lead the Sixth Committee; that since millions of their citizens lived in poverty and were denied basic freedoms, they would no longer lead the Second and Third Committees; and that since they were plagued by corruption, they would no longer oversee the Fifth Committee. They should consider their own shortcomings before offering advice to other Member States. Their call for a secret ballot set a dangerous precedent; the issue was not which nation's representative would serve as Vice-Chair but whether the Committee would allow the United Nations to be degraded and discredited.

8. *Ms. Freimane-Deksne (Latvia) was elected Vice-Chair and Mr. Orellana Zabalza (Guatemala) was elected Rapporteur, by acclamation.*

9. **The Chair** invited the Committee to elect by secret ballot a Vice-Chair from the Western European and other States.

10. *At the invitation of the Chair, Ms. Walker (Canada), Ms. Simunic (Croatia), Ms. del Águila Castillo (Guatemala), Ms. Tambunan (Indonesia),*

Mr. Al-Thani (Qatar), Mr. Fawundu (Sierra Leone) and Mr. Silwamba (Zambia) acted as tellers.

11. *A vote was taken by secret ballot.*

<i>Number of ballot papers:</i>	159
<i>Invalid ballots:</i>	15
<i>Number of valid ballots:</i>	144
<i>Abstentions:</i>	68
<i>Number of members voting:</i>	76
<i>Required majority:</i>	39
<i>Number of votes obtained:</i>	
Mr. Amihai (Israel)	74
Mr. Rayée (Belgium)	1
Ms. Larsen (Norway)	1

12. *Having obtained the required majority, Mr. Amihai (Israel) was elected Vice-Chair.*

13. **Ms. Al-Thani** (Qatar), speaking on behalf of the Group of Arab States, reiterated the Group's rejection of the nomination of a representative of Israel, an occupying Power, for the office of Vice-Chair. Israel continued to violate the Charter of the United Nations, international law, international humanitarian law and numerous international instruments and United Nations resolutions. Its 66-year history of murder, displacement, suppression and occupation disqualified Israel from having its representative serve as Vice-Chair of the Committee, mandated with addressing decolonization and sensitive political questions related to Palestine refugees, peacekeeping, human rights and the activities of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories. By voting against the majority of Committee resolutions and making repeated provocative statements during its deliberations, Israel had showed its flagrant contempt for the work of the Committee and of the General Assembly, particularly in relation to the question of Palestine. It was unacceptable that an occupying Power should be rewarded by having its candidate endorsed for the office of Vice-Chair despite its illegal policies and practices and its belief that it was not accountable for its crimes and violations against the Palestinian people and the other Arab peoples in the occupied territories. The results of the vote indicated that many delegations agreed that Israel was not qualified for such an office and provided further proof that the international community was dissatisfied with Israel's illegal and illegitimate practices.

14. **Mr. Wilson** (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the Western European and other States, said that those States were concerned and disappointed by the decision to call a vote. Such a challenge to a candidate endorsed by a regional group ran counter to the established practices of the United Nations and set a dangerous precedent for future elections. The Western European and other States had always fully respected the endorsements by other regional groups of candidates nominated for the bureaux of the Main Committees and had refrained from raising objections or targeting individual Member States or regional groups for any reason. All Member States should respect the regional rotation scheme approved by the General Assembly in its decision 68/505.

15. **Mr. Al-Mouallimi** (Saudi Arabia), speaking on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, said that the election was a sham. The endorsement by the Western European and other States of a candidate from the world's only occupying Power for office in a Committee with responsibility for decolonization was an outrageous provocation, the moral equivalent of putting the apartheid regime of South Africa in charge of a committee mandated with ending racism.

16. The election was a travesty of the principles of the United Nations, which were based on the sovereign right of nations to independence and self-determination, a right denied to the Palestinian people by the State now entrusted with the office of Vice-Chair. The situation could not be more ironic. The election was also an affront to democracy because, although the Israeli candidate had been elected with the support of only 38 per cent of Member States, the result, by virtue of the procedures of the General Assembly, was being forced on the international community in an entirely undemocratic fashion. Its absurdity was proved by the words of hatred and prejudice of the representative of the occupying Power in Palestine, which had reflected that Israel was not as a country which would further the cause of decolonization but one which arrogantly defied the international community.

17. His delegation agreed with the representative of the United Kingdom that endorsements by regional groups must be respected, but it was inaccurate to say that the Western European and other States had always respected the endorsements of other groups, since they had in fact challenged candidacies in the past. What was at stake was not the challenge against the candidate but the principles of the United Nations — the end of

occupation and colonization and the promotion of self-determination — for which the representative of the occupying Power had not seen fit to declare his support when he had assumed the office of Vice-Chair. The election had been not a victory for Israel but a defeat for the United Nations.

18. **Mr. Dabbashi** (Libya) said that, for the first time since the establishment of the United Nations, the representative of a usurping occupying entity had been elected Vice-Chair of a committee entrusted by the General Assembly with ending decolonization. That was a source of shame for humanity. The result of the secret ballot, however, had made it clear that Israelis were ineligible to hold office in any of the Main Committees. He commended the delegations which had taken the side of right and withheld their vote from the Israeli candidate. It was regrettable that the principle of the geographical distribution of offices had been misused in a way that violated the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, given that Israel had repeatedly violated human rights, had been established through the usurpation of Palestinian territory and continued to attempt to seize the entirety of the historic land of Palestine by every possible means. Israel refused to recognize the State of Palestine, which had existed since before the establishment of Israel and was a member of many international organizations. The result of the secret ballot had been a defeat for Israel, which had garnered only 74 votes, equivalent to barely a third of the Member States.

19. **Mr. Salam** (Lebanon) said that, because his Government believed in the purposes and principles of the United Nations, it could not accept that a nation which refused to uphold those purposes and principles and the resolutions of the United Nations should be rewarded with any office, especially in the Fourth Committee. It had encouraged its partners in the Group of Western European and Other States to endorse an alternative candidate in order to obviate the need for a vote and make the meeting an opportunity to reaffirm the commitment of all to implementing United Nations resolutions. His delegation had made it clear to those partners that it did not consider an Israeli candidate eligible for the office of Vice-Chair.

20. Israel was occupying other countries' territory in violation of the Charter of the United Nations. It was not committed to implementing resolutions of the General Assembly or of the Security Council, did not accept the advisory opinions of the International Court

of Justice and had been condemned by the General Assembly in hundreds of resolutions over the years because it continued to occupy the territory of other nations and to violate the principles of international law, in particular the right to self-determination and other human rights. His delegation would have preferred not to resort to a secret ballot but thanked the delegations which had supported the Group of Arab States in its objective of ensuring that Israel was not elected unanimously.

21. **Mr. Prozor** (Israel) said that the Group of Arab States had all too often been allowed to hijack the United Nations, but that day the voice of reason had prevailed with the election of the Israeli candidate as Vice-Chair. The result of the secret ballot had been a victory not only for Israel but also for the Western European and other States and for the United Nations, at a point in history full of promise and danger, at which the world would either unite or move apart. He commended the members of the Committee for standing together, preserving the rules and norms of the United Nations and uniting around its founding values.

22. **Mr. Rishchynski** (Canada) said that his delegation was dismayed by the unprecedented initiative of calling for a vote in an attempt to prevent the election of the Israeli candidate for the office of Vice-Chair, after he had been duly endorsed by the Group of Western European and Other States. The election by acclamation should have proceeded unhindered in accordance with the usual procedure.

23. **Mr. Ayzouki** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation had objected to the endorsement of an Israeli candidate for the office of Vice-Chair because the Committee dealt primarily with decolonization and the illegal practices of Israel in the occupied Arab territories, including the occupied Syrian Golan, and adopted nine annual resolutions condemning Israel for the occupation and those illegal practices. Israel violated those resolutions on a daily basis, was the only State to vote against resolutions on the occupation of the Arab territories, including the occupied Syrian Golan, and adopted a negative position on the Committee's resolutions on decolonization. The representatives of Israel had made a habit of not respecting the Committee's important work by continually making provocative statements during deliberations and describing that work as politicized and partial. Israel's objective in having its candidate

assume the office of Vice-Chair was clearly to obstruct the work of the Committee and use that office to serve its agenda of occupation and its criminal policies in the occupied Arab territories. The outcome of the vote proved that Israel was unqualified for the office of Vice-Chair, and he thanked those who had refrained from voting for the Israeli candidate.

24. Instead of levelling accusations, the representative of the Israeli occupying authorities should have explained how Israel voted on Committee resolutions and the steps it had taken to implement them, and the heinous adjectives which he had used to describe the Committee. Rather than respond to those legitimate questions, the Israeli representative had nothing to offer but accusations and an abysmal record of human rights violations, settlements, aggression and crimes. He had nothing but the weapons which Israel used to kill Palestinians or sent to terrorists in the Syrian Arab Republic. Israel was therefore not eligible to have its representative serve as Vice-Chair. The Syrian Arab Republic would like to have seen sincere and early efforts by certain groups to garner enough support to defeat the Israeli candidate.

25. **Ms. DiCarlo** (United States of America) said that her delegation regretted the vote on the election of the Israeli candidate for the office of Vice-Chair and the divisive and politicized rhetoric of those who had called for it. In line with the Committee's usual practice, the Israeli candidate, whom her delegation unequivocally supported and who would be a worthy Vice-Chair, should have been elected by acclamation.

26. **Mr. Al Musharakh** (United Arab Emirates) said that the Committee played an important role in addressing issues of foreign occupation and colonization. Its resolutions were essential for the Group of Arab States and directly affected that Group's strategic and political direction with regard to the occupation of the Palestinian territories, Palestinian refugees, peacekeeping and human rights. The Committee also dealt with investigations into Israeli practices which affected the human rights of Palestinians and others under occupation. His delegation strongly objected to the nomination of an Israeli candidate for the office of Vice-Chair of the Committee, because Israel had been the occupying authority in the Arab territories for 47 years and had violated relevant United Nations resolutions, in particular those of the General Assembly on the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. Israel continued to violate the

Charter of the United Nations and to vote against the majority of Committee resolutions, showing its lack of commitment to the Committee's work and to United Nations resolutions on the question of Palestine. The Bureau could not be trusted if one of its members failed to recognize the principles on which the Committee had been established. He thanked those who had prevented the unanimous election of the Israeli representative and indicated that he was not a credible candidate for the office of Vice-Chair.

27. **Mr. Khalil** (Egypt) said that his delegation shared the concerns of many others regarding the politicization of elections, but considered that, given the Committee's mandate to end occupation and promote decolonization, the endorsement of a candidate who represented the only occupying Power of the twenty-first century was in itself a form of politicization; that had been borne out by the Israeli representative's statements before and after the voting, in which he had launched a blatant political attack on members of the Group of Arab States. The results of the secret ballot were very clear: only 74 of 193 nations had voted in favour of the endorsed candidate. He hoped that the occupying Power and the Western European and other States, which had endorsed its candidate for the office of Vice-Chair, would hear that message.

28. **Mr. Bhattarai** (Nepal) said that it was an honour for him to be entrusted with the Chair of the Committee. He was aware of the importance and sensitivity of the Committee's work and was confident that he would receive the understanding, cooperation and support of the entire membership during his tenure.

29. **Mr. Bayat Mokhtari** (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that, for obvious reasons, the representative of Israel had attempted to distract the attention of the General Assembly by making racist remarks about the Islamic Republic of Iran. However, the discussion at the meeting had concerned not the Islamic Republic of Iran but the inappropriateness of endorsing the candidacy, for the Bureau of a Committee dealing with occupation, decolonization and peacekeeping, of the representative of a country profoundly involved in occupation, colonization and war. His delegation deeply regretted the fact that the Committee would have to endure the representative of a brutal occupying force as one of its Vice-Chairs.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.