



General Assembly

Sixty-eighth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
17 March 2014

Original: English

Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 27th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 3 March 2014, at 10 a.m.

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

Contents

- Tribute to the memory of Zhang Wanhai
- Organization of work
- Agenda item 140: Joint Inspection Unit

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>).

14-25102 (E)



Please recycle



The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Tribute to the memory of Zhang Wanhai

1. **The Chair** paid tribute to the memory of Mr. Zhang Wanhai, a member of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions.

Organization of work (A/C.5/68/L.27)

2. **The Chair** invited the Committee to consider the proposed tentative and provisional programme of work for the first part of the resumed sixty-eighth session, prepared on the basis of the note by the Secretariat on the status of preparedness of documentation (A/C.5/68/L.27).

3. He informed the Committee that the Bureau had been actively pursuing the matter of the late issuance of reports and that as a result all the reports of the Secretariat, except one, had been issued. Advisory Committee reports would be completed as quickly as possible.

4. **Mr. Llorentty Solíz** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the late issuance of important reports was a chronic problem affecting the work of the Committee. He expressed concern about the status of documentation for the first part of the resumed sixty-eighth session: in order for the Committee to work effectively it was essential for reports by the Secretariat and the Advisory Committee to be issued in a timely manner in all official languages, in accordance with the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

5. Another issue affecting not only the work of the Committee, but also that of delegations, was changes to the access afforded by United Nations Headquarters grounds passes. A recent note by the Secretariat indicated that all non-diplomatic members of permanent missions and permanent observer missions would be denied access to certain areas of the campus. In fact many permanent missions had non-diplomatic staff who performed essential tasks, including representing their mission. The lack of consultation with Member States on what was a far-reaching initiative was a matter of concern.

6. **Ms. Coto-Ramírez** (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that the programme of work included many questions of great importance to CELAC. Discussions of issues deferred from the main part of the session, particularly the proposed mobility policy, should be based on the agreements already reached on those issues and every effort should be made to achieve a compromise on outstanding issues in a transparent and pragmatic manner. On procurement reform, she underlined the importance of improving the Organization's procurement system, in particular by increasing opportunities for vendors from developing countries.

7. The Community was concerned over the delayed submission of reports, since it had a negative impact on the Committee's debates, efficiency and negotiations. It was imperative for the Secretariat to take the necessary steps to remedy the situation and to respond to the repeated demands of Member States to submit reports on time, in accordance with the Assembly's rules of procedure and resolutions. The late issuance of crucial documents had a direct bearing on the Committee's ability to complete its work within the time allotted for the first part of the resumed session.

8. Delegations must also respect that deadline in order to avoid any repetition of the situation experienced at the first part of the resumed sixty-seventh session, which had resulted in negotiations lasting almost five months. Such situations were not consistent with the efficiency and effectiveness that Member States had long called for in successive General Assembly resolutions, and significantly impacted upon the activities and mandates of the Organization.

9. **Ms. Pacunega Manano** (Uganda), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said that she hoped that the Committee would complete its work within the time allocated for the first part of the resumed session; negotiations should be conducted in good faith, in an open, inclusive and transparent manner, as part of the intergovernmental process. No parallel meetings should be held, as many of the smaller delegations were unable to attend more than one meeting at a time. There should be no negotiations in small configurations behind closed doors.

10. The Committee would consider a number of important issues at the first part of the resumed session, notably accountability, procurement, the new facility for the Arusha branch of the International Residual Mechanism, human rights treaty bodies, the proposed mobility policy, the Partnership Facility and special political missions. With regard to the latter, she expressed concern at the situation in the Central African Republic; the Group would spare no effort to re-establish security in that country so as to facilitate the successful conclusion of the transition, and to ensure that the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA) had the necessary resources to implement its mandate effectively.

11. Lastly, in order to give the Committee sufficient time to consider reports and take informed decisions, it was essential for documents to be issued in a timely manner in all official languages. The late issuance of an increasing number of documents must be addressed.

12. **Mr. Vrailas** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that, given the number of important items before the Committee at the first part of the resumed session, including issues deferred from previous sessions, the late submission of many of the relevant reports by the Secretary-General and the Advisory Committee was disappointing and risked undermining their thorough and timely consideration by the Committee.

13. As strong proponents of managed mobility, the member States of the European Union were disappointed that agreement had not been reached at the main part of the sixty-eighth session, and hoped that the Committee could overcome the remaining obstacles and enable the Secretary-General to implement the managed mobility scheme. Another issue deferred to the resumed session owing to a lack of agreement was the Partnership Facility. As the many partnerships across the United Nations system played an important role in promoting dialogue and cooperation between the Organization and relevant stakeholders, he hoped that agreement

could be reached on the establishment of such a facility, with a view to enhancing the results of those partnerships.

14. With regard to United Nations Headquarters accommodation needs, it was crucial to discuss solutions that truly met the Organization's future needs and provided the most favourable, sustainable and financially viable terms and conditions. Related issues were such flexible workplace arrangements as telecommuting, staggered working hours and compressed work schedules. Lastly, the General Assembly had continuously underlined the importance of executing the capital master plan on time and within budget, bearing in mind opportunities for further absorption of the associated costs in an accountable and transparent manner. However, he remained concerned about the last stages of the project and its related final financial developments. Those questions, as well as the handling of the associated costs during the period 2008-2013 and the future of the South Annex and Dag Hammarskjold Library, would require thorough discussion by the Committee.

15. **Mr. Yamazaki** (Japan) said that, as a supporter of management reform initiatives to make the Organization more sustainable, efficient and effective, his delegation supported the mobility proposal. It was unfortunate that the Committee had been unable to reach agreement at the main part of the session; he hoped that the outstanding issues would be resolved quickly and that a consensus resolution would be adopted. The Committee should avoid replicating previous discussions and should be forward-looking in its deliberations.

16. As the first part of the resumed session would be one of the busiest in recent years, with many important items before the Committee, including the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, which faced serious financial difficulties that must be resolved without delay in order for the Chambers to continue their important work, he urged the Committee to conclude its consideration of all issues by the end of the session.

17. In order to make the Organization more accountable, efficient and sustainable, the Committee had to discuss items with important implications for the future of the United Nations, such as accountability and the Organization's long-term

accommodation needs. The difficult negotiations at the main part of the session had highlighted the need for all parties to be flexible if consensus was to be reached. Compromise should not be seen as something negative, but, rather, a collective effort for the benefit of the Organization. The Committee should therefore adopt a collaborative, flexible and constructive approach in tackling the difficult tasks before it.

18. **Ms. Colín Ortega** (Mexico) said that the issues to be addressed by the Committee at the first part of the resumed session would define strategic elements shaping the future of the Organization. The proposed staff mobility policy and the Partnership Facility would ensure that the Organization's resources could meet global demands and complexities in the decades to come. The Partnership Facility could prove a valuable tool complementing the efforts of Member States to finance the growing number of activities carried out by the United Nations. Issues related to procurement, civilian capacities in post-conflict situations and accountability would also have an impact on the Organization's efficiency.

19. The Committee's working methods and some aspects of programme planning and the budget process merited serious reflection with a view to avoiding the use of delaying tactics that resulted in ad hoc, artificial solutions and that had a negative impact on future negotiations. Another priority issue was the funding and backstopping arrangements for special political missions, which she hoped would be resolved along with other deferred questions.

20. **Mr. Lieberman** (United States of America) said that there was clear consensus in the Committee that its work should not extend beyond the informal deadline of 24 December at the main part of the session, as it had in 2013. While the Committee had achieved consensus on a number of noteworthy budget, staffing and policy initiatives at the main part of the session, important issues relating to policies that would move the Organization towards more responsible stewardship of resources, higher standards of performance and improved outcomes in the years ahead had had to be deferred.

21. Member States, and the Secretariat, too often focused on immediate needs, rather than long-term vision. At the current part of the session the

Committee must take decisions on critical issues having a long-term impact on the health and sustainability of the United Nations. Member States must provide the tools and guidance needed to shape the Organization over the next 10 to 20 years.

22. The Committee had expended considerable energy over the past year discussing the mobility proposal, a decision that would shape the Organization for years to come; however, the time had come for action. The Committee had been close to reaching agreement at the main part of the session, and he urged delegations to resolve any outstanding issues expeditiously, and adopt a decision to charge the Secretary-General to implement a solution.

23. The Committee must also move forward on the proposed establishment of a Partnership Facility harnessing private and government resources in support of the vital work done worldwide by the United Nations.

24. He looked forward to consensus on those and other deferred questions, including the terms of reference of the representative of the Secretary-General for the investment of the assets of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund, the subvention for the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, civilian capacity, accountability and the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU). The Committee would also discuss organizational resilience, the long-term accommodation needs of the United Nations, and the financing of the associated costs of the capital master plan, at a time when national budgets were ever more severely constrained. Lastly, he expressed regret that the question of the long-term accommodation needs of the United Nations would be introduced only two days before the end of the first part of the resumed session.

25. **Mr. León González** (Cuba) said that the lessons learned during 2013 should form the basis of a careful analysis of the Committee's working methods as part of an efficiency review. Serious difficulties had come to light in the interaction among delegations, and the lack of dialogue and political will that had prevailed during the consideration of many issues had affected the efficiency and quality of the Committee's decision-making process. Such behaviour called into question

the Committee's responsibility for ensuring the efficient use of the Organization's resources. At the resumed session all delegations should exert real political will and allow negotiations to take place within the Committee at the expert level, in accordance with the letter and spirit of the Charter.

26. Lastly, he asked the Secretariat to provide information on how General Assembly resolution [68/246](#), on questions relating to the programme budget for 2014-2015, was being implemented. Recalling that the General Assembly had emphasized in previous resolutions that the introduction of new technology should lead neither to the involuntary separation of staff nor necessarily to a reduction in staff, he asked what measures had been taken to redeploy those staff members from the Publishing Section of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management and other departments whose posts had been abolished.

27. **The Chair** said that he took it that the Committee wished to approve the proposed programme of work on the understanding that it would be adjusted by the Bureau as necessary during the course of the session.

28. *It was so decided.*

Agenda item 140: Joint Inspection Unit ([A/68/34](#) and [A/68/739](#))

29. **Mr. Terzi** (Chair, Joint Inspection Unit), introducing the report of the Joint Inspection Unit for 2013 and programme of work for 2014 ([A/68/34](#)), said that in 2013 the Unit had issued four reports, two notes and one management letter, and had completed two feasibility studies. It had also worked on numerous non-report activities. With the arrival of five new inspectors in 2013, the Unit had seized the opportunity to critically examine its functioning, undergo a self-evaluation and submit itself to a review by external peers, in accordance with General Assembly resolution [67/256](#).

30. The Unit's comprehensive self-evaluation had identified areas for further improvement and led to the adoption of an action plan. Subsequently, a peer review had been conducted by a panel of senior external oversight experts, who had found that JIU had introduced effective internal reforms, that the Unit's work was conducted independently with strong quality assurance processes in place, and that

there was strong support for its work and recognition of its importance in oversight. The panel had made a number of recommendations, some of which were addressed directly to Member States and others to JIU. The majority of the latter had been accepted and integrated into the Unit's action plan for further reform; it was now up to Member States to play their part in the reform process.

31. The panel had also noted that the Unit's current resource levels were not commensurate with its mandate and had recommended that Member States should increase its budget. The Unit strongly endorsed the panel's call for additional financial allocations for consultancies, outreach, travel and building expertise in order to further improve the relevance, utility and quality of its work. A summary of the findings of the peer review panel could be found in the annual report, and the full text was available on the JIU website.

32. Over the years, JIU had contributed to most of the major reform areas in the United Nations system through the preparation of high quality reports, which included reform-oriented recommendations. Analysis of acceptance and implementation rates of the Unit's system-wide recommendations from 2005 to 2012 by the eight largest participating organizations, representing more than 80 per cent of the United Nations system in terms of budgetary spending, indicated that the average acceptance rate, at 75 per cent, was good, and that the acceptance rate for single organization reviews, at 81 per cent, was even better, particularly in the light of the complex, cross-cutting nature and organizational implications of the recommendations. It was the shared responsibility of the Unit, the executive heads of participating organizations and Member States to make use of JIU reports.

33. The programme of work for 2014 had been prepared with the objective of addressing critical system-wide risks and reform issues in a more structured way. It included 10 new projects focused on topics of system-wide relevance, as well as administrative and development-oriented inspections and evaluations, including safety and security of United Nations personnel and premises, climate change, decent employment for all, and contract management. However, the Unit's work continued to be affected by the issue of resources. One of the most pertinent recommendations of the peer review

panel was that Member States should safeguard the independence of JIU and ensure that the Unit's original budget proposals reached the Committee without having been changed by the entities overseen by JIU. There was consensus that there was a clear conflict of interest in the current JIU budgetary process and that it hampered the Unit's independence and effectiveness. He urged the Committee to resolve the matter once and for all.

34. The continued resource constraints prevented the Unit from carrying out its programme of work properly. He therefore appealed to Member States to consider providing extrabudgetary resources for some of the reports, in particular those on the safety and security of United Nations personnel and premises worldwide and the activities and resources dedicated to climate change. Without additional resources, there was a risk that those reports would suffer from a lack of input from the field and necessary expertise.

35. The Unit would continue to maximize the application of its web-based tracking system to follow up on the acceptance and implementation of recommendations. The Unit had been able to launch the system, which could be used not only by JIU and its participating organizations but also by Members States, thanks to Member States' investment in the system. However, no dedicated funding had been made available for its maintenance and hosting. Unless additional resources were provided under the regular budget or from extrabudgetary resources, the entire budget allocation for consultancy would have to be used to maintain the tracking system. Such a situation would seriously hamper the preparation of upcoming JIU reports. He therefore appealed to delegations to reinstate the \$100,000 increase allocated to the Unit in 2011 for the 2012-2013 biennium, which could then be used to guarantee the maintenance and hosting of the system.

36. Lastly, following the decision to conduct independent system-wide evaluations of operational activities for development, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 67/226, the Unit had invested considerable time in planning and laying the foundations for that initiative and stood ready to host the evaluations secretariat, once the necessary extrabudgetary resources were in place.

37. **Mr. Herman** (United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination), introducing the note by the Secretary-General on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit for 2013 (A/68/739), said that to promote the speedier transmission of comments on JIU reports, CEB had urged organizations to respond more quickly to requests for comment. It was increasingly common for the CEB secretariat to work closely with the Unit's inspectors as they drafted reports in order to yield a comprehensive and agreed outcome.

38. Collaboration between the two bodies had intensified recently as a consequence of the Unit's increased study of system-wide issues. Those activities had been performed using existing, very limited, capacities. As JIU continued to implement its strategic framework for 2010-2019 and heighten its system-wide focus, there would be further strain on CEB resources.

39. The Secretary-General, in his capacity as CEB Chair, had called upon member organizations to ensure good communication with the Unit, respond quickly to requests for information, and ensure timely follow-up to its recommendations. Where appropriate, JIU inspectors were invited to participate in meetings of the Board's subsidiary machinery. Continued dialogue between CEB and JIU had improved their collaboration and thus contributed to building a stronger United Nations system working as one.

40. **Ms. Rios Requena** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group highly valued the work of the Joint Inspection Unit as the sole independent external oversight body. While the Group welcomed the JIU reform initiatives, it hoped that those changes would not slow down the work of JIU, and looked forward to hearing more about the reforms and their impact on mandate delivery.

41. The Group also welcomed the self-evaluation undertaken by JIU in 2013, which had shown that the reform efforts of the past few years had resulted in the Unit's becoming more strategic, relevant, quality-oriented and utilization-focused. The self-evaluation also showed that the Unit had strengthened its working methods and norms and standards. However, the Group noted with concern that despite the fact that the institutional framework

of the Unit was solid, its independence was negatively affected by its inability to present its budgetary requirements to the Fifth Committee.

42. The web-based tracking system, used to follow up organizations' acceptance and implementation of JIU recommendations, had proven to be an important oversight tool for JIU, United Nations organizations and Member States. The necessary resources for its maintenance and hosting should continue to be provided at the same level as under the 2012-2013 budget.

43. The Group commended the Unit on its programme of work for 2014, with 10 projects of interest to Member States, notably reviews of safety and security of United Nations personnel and premises worldwide, activities and resources allocated to climate change, and the implementation of the initiative for full and productive employment and decent work for all. The Group also commended JIU on the efforts to improve its working methods, harmonize its practices with the standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group and coordinate with other oversight bodies, particularly as the Unit was the sole independent external oversight body of the United Nations system mandated to conduct evaluations, inspections and investigations.

44. **Mr. Lieberman** (United States of America) said that oversight bodies, such as JIU, played a key role in ensuring the effectiveness of the United Nations system. His delegation welcomed the Unit's efforts to professionalize, codify and streamline its procedures and working methods, notably through the recent self-evaluation and external peer review, and wished to learn more about the action plan and how the Unit would improve the quality, relevance and utility of its reports. The Unit's reports had contributed to major accomplishments, including the establishment of independent audit committees throughout the common system, improvements in results-based management, and the implementation of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS). However, greater improvements could be made. The Unit's reports should be issued in a more timely manner, and be more closely aligned with the Committee's programme of work, as the reports were often issued too far in advance of or too late in the session to add value to the process. The delay in the completion of the reports from the programme of work for 2013 was a matter of

concern. His delegation also noted the Unit's concerns about resources and looked forward to learning more about those concerns, their impact, and how they could be addressed given the current constrained budget environment.

45. Turning to the Unit's programme of work for 2014, he welcomed the efforts to better align it with the Unit's long-term strategy for 2010-2019. He hoped that the Unit, by improving its selection of topics, would produce reports that were more relevant to its clients. He also welcomed the Unit's role in working with other oversight bodies on the two proposed pilot system-wide evaluations of operational activities for development.

46. His delegation had long advocated that JIU should focus on issues of system-wide relevance, and remained concerned that acceptance rates of recommendations contained in system-wide reports were relatively low, compared to single-organization reports. While he welcomed the new web-based tracking system, JIU should work with its clients to ensure its recommendations were accepted and implemented. Lastly, candidate inspectors from Member States should be senior experts with senior level inspection, evaluation and audit experience, able to meet high professional standards.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.