

27 December 2013

English only

Sixty-eighth session
Fourth Committee

Agenda item 122

Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly**Methods of work of the Special Political and Decolonization
Committee (Fourth Committee)****Report of the Chair of the Special Political and Decolonization
Committee (Fourth Committee) to be presented orally to the Ad
Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly**

1. The present report is presented in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 19 of General Assembly resolution [67/297](#), in which the Assembly requested each Main Committee to further discuss its working methods at the beginning of every session, and invited the Chairs of the Main Committees to brief the Ad Hoc Working Group on Revitalization of the Assembly, as appropriate, on the discussions on the working methods.
2. The review of the working methods of the Fourth Committee was conducted bearing in mind General Assembly resolutions [48/264](#), [58/126](#), [58/316](#), [59/313](#), [60/286](#), [64/301](#) and [65/315](#), [66/294](#) and [67/297](#), on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

Election of the Bureau, rotation of elected officers

3. At the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly in 2001, the Fourth Committee adopted a system for the rotation of the Chair and other elected officers of the Committee, following the English alphabetical order of the regional groups (see [A/C.4/56/SR.17](#) and [A/C.4/56/SR.18](#)). This system was not followed consistently in the intervening years. The rotation of officers in the Committee from the fifty-sixth to sixty-eighth sessions was the following:



<i>GA Session</i>	<i>4C Chair</i>	<i>4C Rapporteur</i>
56th (2001)	Malaysia (Asian States)	South Africa (African States)
57th (2002)	South Africa (African States)	Slovakia (Eastern European States)
58th (2003)	Uruguay (Latin America and Caribbean States)	Ireland (Western Europe and other States)
59th (2004)	Myanmar (Asian States)	Tunisia (African States)
60th (2005)	Azerbaijan (Eastern European States)	Brunei Darussalam (Asian States)
61st (2006)	Nepal (Asian States)	Azerbaijan (Eastern European States)
62nd (2007)	Sudan (African States)	Honduras (Latin America and Caribbean States)
63rd GA (2008)	Argentina (Latin America and Caribbean States)	Finland (Western Europe and other States)
64th (2009)	Qatar (Asian States)	Sudan (African States)
65th (2010)	Zimbabwe (African States)	Afghanistan (Asian States)
66th (2011)	Romania (Eastern European States)	Kuwait (Asian States)
67th (2012)	Gabon (African States)	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (Eastern European States)
68th (2013)	El Salvador (Latin America and Caribbean States)	Slovakia (Eastern European States)

4. In accordance with General Assembly decision [68/505](#) of 1 October 2013, it has been agreed that the rotation of Chairs of the Fourth Committee for the next five sessions will be the following:

<i>GA Session</i>	<i>Chair</i>
69th GA (2014)	Asia-Pacific States
70th GA (2015)	African States
71st GA (2016)	Eastern European States
72nd GA (2017)	Latin America and Caribbean States
73rd GA (2018)	African States

5. The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) wishes to reaffirm its practice of having the officers of the Committee elected on the basis of geographical distribution.

6. The Fourth Committee reaffirms section B, paragraph 9, of the annex to resolution 58/126, which stipulates, inter alia, that the Bureau should be elected three months in advance of the next session in order to foster better advance planning and preparation of the work. In accordance with paragraph 3 (f) of the annex to resolution 58/316, the Bureau-elect will meet immediately after its election to discuss the organization and division of the work as well as to consider the programme of work of the Committee. With a view to ensuring the continuity and the effective organization of its work, the incoming Bureau will continue to meet with the outgoing Bureau to consult on and review issues relating to the efficient functioning of the Committee.

Agenda and programme of work of the Committee

7. It is recalled that the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) was created in accordance with General Assembly resolution 47/233 of 17 August 1993, whereby the Assembly decided to merge the Special Political Committee and the Fourth Committee into one committee.

8. The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) deals with issues relating to decolonization, as well as items of a political nature, ranging from a comprehensive review of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects to international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space to questions relating to information.

9. At the sixty-eighth session, pursuant to resolution 67/123, a new item entitled "Comprehensive review of special political missions" was added to the agenda of the Fourth Committee.

10. The majority of the agenda items allocated to the Fourth Committee are considered annually. The exceptions are "Assistance in mine action", which, in accordance with paragraph 4 (j) of the annex to resolution 58/316, is considered biennially and "University for Peace", which, pursuant to paragraph 4 (k) of the same resolution, is considered on a triennial basis.

11. The five agenda items relating to decolonization have been clustered, whereby a joint general debate is held on the five items, following which action is taken on all draft resolutions and decisions submitted under these items at the same meeting. A mixed approach is taken to the consideration of the items "United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East" and "Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories". While there are separate general debates on each of these items, action on the draft resolutions submitted under the two items is taken at the same meeting.

12. A particular practice of the Fourth Committee in relation to decolonization is the hearing of representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories and "petitioners" (who can be individuals or representatives of organizations), who speak on some of the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories that are under consideration by the General Assembly and its Special Committee on Decolonization. The practice of the Fourth Committee is to hear the petitioners early in the session. While the number had been

increasing in recent years, at the sixty-eighth session, 77 petitioners made statements, compared to a high of 93 at the sixty-fifth session in 2010. During the past several sessions, a time limit of four minutes has been applied for statements by petitioners. It is desirable that the number of petitioners approved to speak at any session remain at a level which can be accommodated within the programme of work of the Committee.

13. The consideration of the item “Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects” is split between the main and resumed sessions. During the main session, an informal interactive dialogue and general debate is held, whereas consideration of the report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and the related draft resolution takes place in a resumed session after the conclusion of the Special Committee’s session.

14. Under the item “International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space”, it is the practice of the Committee to establish a working group of the whole, chaired by the Chair of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, to finalize the draft resolution to be submitted under that item.

15. The draft programme of work of the Committee is prepared in accordance with paragraph (b) of rule 99 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. For the sixty-eighth session, the General Assembly allocated 16 agenda items to the Fourth Committee, as follows:

Election of the officers of the Main Committees [item 5].

B. Maintenance of international peace and security

Assistance in mine action [item 48].

Effects of atomic radiation [item 49].

International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space [item 50].

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East [item 51].

Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories [item 52].

Comprehensive review of special political missions [item 53].

Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects [item 54].

Questions relating to information [item 55].

Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations [item 56].

Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories [item 57].

Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations [item 58].

Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories [item 59].

Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples [item 60].

Organizational, administrative and other matters

Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly [item 122].

Programme planning [item 135].

16. The Committee will continue to consider and make proposals for the further biennialization, triennialization or clustering of items on its agenda, while taking into account the relevant recommendations of the Ad Hoc Working Group.

Question time, interactive dialogues, introductory statements and general discussion of agenda items

17. It is the established practice, at the time of consideration of items or clusters of items, and pursuant to subparagraphs 3 (c) and (d) of the annex to General Assembly resolution 58/316, to hold interactive dialogues at the beginning of the general debates on various items, such as the peacekeeping item; questions relating to information; and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East item, with high-level representatives of the Secretariat or heads of agencies. Participation in these interactive segments varies widely.

18. Delegations are encouraged to participate actively in the interactive dialogues with questions and unscripted comments. It is strongly advised that the comments and questions in the interactive dialogues be limited to two to three minutes. The general discussion of each agenda item or cluster of agenda items follows the question time.

19. It is the view of the Bureau of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee for the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly that an interactive dialogue or panel discussion under the item "International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space" should be organized during the sixty-ninth session of the Assembly. Possibilities of organizing a similar event under the item "Effects of atomic radiation" should also be explored.

20. In accordance with the established practice of the Committee, statements made during the general discussion under each agenda item or cluster of agenda items continue to be limited to 10 minutes for individual delegations and 15 minutes for statements made on behalf of a group of delegations.

21. Also, in accordance with previous decisions of the General Assembly, delegations exercise their right of reply at the end of the day whenever two meetings have been scheduled for the consideration of the relevant agenda item on that day.

Draft resolutions submitted in the Fourth Committee

22. Some draft resolutions considered by the Committee are contained in the annual reports of subsidiary bodies (Committee on Information, Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the

Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples). Others are submitted to the Committee as Chair's texts or by Member States.

23. The Committee adopts proposals throughout the session after the conclusion of the general discussion of the item or cluster of items.

24. There is an established pattern by which some proposals are adopted by consensus while others are adopted by a recorded vote.

Reports and documentation before the Committee

25. When reports are not available in all languages within the six-week time frame, every effort shall be made to make them available, with the agreement of the Bureau, in their advance unedited version, in English only, on the internal website of the Committee.

Utilization of the Fourth Committee website and QuickPlace

26. With a view to expediting information-sharing and promoting efficient and cost-effective work, the website of the Fourth Committee should be regularly improved, developed and utilized. The increased utilization of the internal website of the Committee (<https://4thcommittee.unlb.org>), for circulating updated information on the status of the Committee's work and negotiations, has greatly facilitated the smooth and timely conclusion of the Committee's work in the past few years.

Conference facilities and meeting arrangements

27. As decided by the General Assembly in paragraph 36 of the annex to resolution [51/241](#) of 22 August 1997 "the First Committee and the Fourth Committee shall not meet simultaneously and may consider meeting in a sequential manner during the regular session of the General Assembly. This arrangement shall not apply if it affects their respective identities, programmes of work and effective consideration of their agendas". In accordance with that provision, the meetings of the Fourth Committee are held either in the morning or in the afternoon, alternating on a weekly basis. The Secretariats of the two Main Committees coordinate in preparing the draft programme of work for each session. The Committee is believed to benefit from the practice by which no parallel meetings of the Fourth and First Committees are held, thus allowing fuller, more active coverage of the two bodies by smaller delegations.

28. Unless otherwise specified, official meetings of the Committee are held from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 3 to 6 p.m. The Chair and Vice-Chairs try to ensure that meetings start on time, which is critical to the efficient utilization of services allocated to the intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations. In accordance with past practice and relevant decision of the General Assembly, the Committee will continue its practice and waive rule 108 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly with respect to the quorum to declare a meeting open.

Conclusion of the work of the Committee

29. Bearing in mind the number of meetings allocated to the Fourth Committee, a target date of mid-November is set each year for the conclusion of its work. The

Committee has been able to conclude its work as scheduled at the sixty-seventh and sixty-eighth sessions and will endeavour to do so in future years.

Future efforts towards the revitalization of the work of the Fourth Committee and collaboration with other Main Committees

30. The Fourth Committee should consider closer collaboration and cooperation with other Main Committees to identify and address issues that are also under the consideration of those Committees while respecting the division of responsibilities. The Fourth Committee should also take into account the experience and best practices of other Main Committees in improving its methods of work.

31. The Fourth Committee shall continue to examine ways to revitalize its work, as requested in General Assembly resolution [67/297](#) and previous resolutions, and to take appropriate action by consensus and shall keep the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly updated in this regard.
