



General Assembly

Sixty-ninth session

First Committee

1st meeting

Friday, 3 October 2014 10 a.m.

New York

Official Records

Chair: Mr. Rattray (Jamaica)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Introductory statement

The Chair: Let me begin by extending a very warm welcome to all delegations participating in the work of the First Committee this year. I look forward to working closely with each and every one of them in the weeks ahead.

As in previous years, we have a full agenda, and I am convinced that we also have the necessary will and commitment to conduct our work in a cooperative, efficient and expeditious manner. In fulfilling my responsibility to guide the work of the First Committee to a successful conclusion, I count on the usual cooperation and goodwill of all delegations. I am also confident that I can rely on the support of all members of the Bureau, namely, the three Vice-Chairs — Mr. Saad Abdullah Al Saad of Saudi Arabia, Ms. Maria Victoria González Román of Spain, and Ms. Narcisa Daciana Vlădulescu of Romania — and the Rapporteur, Ms. Saada Daher Hassan of Djibouti. I have no doubt that the Committee will benefit tremendously from their collective wisdom.

Furthermore, I am certain that the Committee will continue to receive the full support of the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management.

Organization of work

The Chair: For our consideration of the organization of work, I wish to draw the Committee's attention to document A/C.1/69/1, containing a letter

dated 19 September 2014 from the President of the General Assembly to the Chair of the First Committee. The letter highlights the decisions pertaining to the allocation of items to the First Committee taken by the General Assembly at its 2nd plenary meeting, held the same day.

At that meeting, the Assembly decided to allocate 21 agenda items, that is, items 5, 87-104, 118 and 133, to the First Committee for consideration during this session, of which 18 of them, namely, items 87 to 104, relate to disarmament and international security issues. As members know, under agenda item 118, concerning the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, the Committee will consider and take action on its draft programme of work and timetable for the seventieth session. Item 133 on programme planning, has been allocated to all the Main Committees, as well as to the Assembly plenary, in a continuing effort to enhance the discussion of the evaluation, planning, budgeting and monitoring of reports. The First Committee will take up that item if the Assembly assigns any report to it.

I will now proceed to highlight the details of the Committee's proposed programme of work and timetable, as outlined in document A/C.1/69/CRP.1, which contains information identical to that which was adopted in General Assembly decision 68/520, of 5 December 2013. Since next Monday is a United Nations holiday, the First Committee will commence its substantive work next Tuesday, 7 October. It will hold a total of 23 meetings and should conclude its work by 5 November, in accordance with the decision taken by the General Assembly at its 2nd plenary meeting.

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In accordance with the First Committee's established practice and as currently reflected in the provisional programme of work for this session, the Committee will conduct its work in three phases, namely, a general debate on all items, a thematic discussion on subject areas, and action on all draft resolutions. I shall reflect briefly on what we should expect under each of those three segments.

The first phase, the general debate on all items, will run from 7 to 15 October for a total of seven meetings. Please note that during that phase of our work the Committee will have its usual exchange with the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs on the follow-up to resolutions and decisions adopted by the Committee at its previous sessions and the presentation of reports. The exact date for that exchange will be announced in due course in consultation with the Office of the High Representative.

To maximize the time available to us during the general debate, I propose that we maintain the practice of using a rolling list of speakers, which is currently open to all delegations wishing to take the floor. I am aware that a considerable number of delegations have already inscribed their names on the list, and I invite those intending to speak but who have not yet inscribed their names on the list to do so as soon as possible. As indicated in the programme of work, the list of speakers for the general debate will be closed on Wednesday, 8 October, at 6 p.m.

I should also like to remind all delegations that inscribe their names on the list to bear in mind that a rolling list implies that they should be prepared to intervene at any time, possibly even one meeting sooner than they had originally planned to speak. To make the most efficient use of the resources allocated to us, I should like to urge all delegations taking the floor to kindly adhere to the Committee's usual practice of limiting their statements to a maximum of 10 minutes when speaking in a national capacity and 15 minutes for those delegations speaking on behalf of groups of delegations.

In that regard, I invite all delegations with relatively long statements to deliver a concise summary of their text orally and to submit the full statement in written form for posting on the First Committee web portal, QuickFirst. For those who need assistance in accessing the web portal, kindly contact the Committee's secretariat. I have also been informed that the President

of the General Assembly has expressed an interest in addressing the First Committee at some point. I shall duly inform members once we have confirmation of the date and time for his statement.

The second stage of the Committee's work will focus on a thematic discussion as well as on the introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions and decisions. That segment will run from Thursday, 16 October, to Tuesday, 28 October, for a total of 11 meetings. During that second phase and in accordance with established practice, the Committee will hold a high-level exchange with the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and other high-level officials in the field of arms control and disarmament. Following consultations with the Bureau, I should like to propose that that panel focus on "increasing the capacity of international organizations to address weapons of mass destruction", and I intend to circulate a concept paper on that sub-theme next week.

The thematic segment will also feature panel discussions and other exchanges with independent experts. Also during that phase the Committee will allow time for statements by representatives of non-governmental organizations. The Committee's meetings during the thematic segment will be divided into two parts. The first will begin in a formal mode with a panel or guest speaker, as applicable, followed by an informal question and answer segment. The second part will be in a formal mode and will consist of interventions by delegations, including the introduction of draft resolutions and decisions. In line with the Committee's established practice, the details of the programme of work for our thematic segment are contained in document A/C.1/69/CRP.2, which has also been circulated in the conference room.

As indicated in the programme of work, the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions and decisions is Thursday, 16 October, at 12 noon. Compliance with that deadline will provide sufficient time to delegations for consultations and ensure the timely issuance of all drafts as "L" documents in all official languages. Details concerning the electronic submission process of draft resolutions and decisions are available from the secretariat.

Furthermore, I should like to remind all delegations that the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and the Fifth Committee require time to review the programme budget implications of any draft resolution or decision

before it can be acted upon by the General Assembly. This year's technical briefing by the Secretariat, to be held immediately after the adjournment of this meeting, will include information on procedures for reviewing the programme budget implications of draft resolutions and decisions, as well as their editorial reviews.

In paragraph 50 of its report (A/69/250), the General Committee draws the attention of the General Assembly to the views expressed by the ACABQ regarding the use of the phrase "within available resources" as set out in document A/54/7. Accordingly, the use of that phrase in draft resolutions or decisions should be avoided.

The list of speakers for the thematic segment will open on 9 October following the closure of the list of speakers for the general debate on the previous day. All delegations wishing to speak during the thematic discussion stage should bear in mind that the time limit for statements in the national capacity is five minutes, and for statements on behalf of several delegations, the time limit is seven minutes. That is in accordance with the outcome of the Committee's informal consultations on its working methods last December. The list of speakers for the thematic discussions will be closed on Tuesday, 21 October, at 6 p.m., as indicated in the programme of work. With members' understanding, I intend to apply those time limits faithfully so as to enable the Committee to complete its work on schedule and avoid the difficulty of time shortages. I therefore urge all delegations wishing to take the floor at that stage kindly to prepare their statements in accordance with those stipulated time limits.

The third and last segment of the work of the Committee, namely, action on all draft resolutions and decisions, will run from Wednesday, 29 October, to Wednesday, 5 November, a total of six meetings. I propose that the Committee retain the procedure that it has followed in previous years by which draft resolutions and decisions are grouped in clusters: nuclear weapons; other weapons of mass destruction; outer space (disarmament aspects); conventional weapons; regional disarmament and security; other disarmament measures and international security; and disarmament machinery. I will provide the Committee with further information on that final phase of our work closer to the beginning of that segment.

I now give the floor to representatives who wish to take the floor at this time for comments or questions

on the information I have provided so far regarding the organization of the Committee's work for this session.

Mr. Robotjazi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. Chair, we have received your proposed draft of the indicative timetable for the structured discussion of specific subjects and the programme of work. We note that there have been some changes in those drafts compared to previous sessions of the First Committee. We believe that those changes are not necessarily in accordance with the established practice and tradition of the First Committee, which is long-established and not new.

Moreover, those changes are not in line with the priorities that have been established in the First Committee in the field of disarmament. For example, the placement of the thematic discussion on nuclear weapons has been changed in the draft indicative timetable for this year's session. That change is, in our view, significant, is not acceptable to us and is not justified in our view. We propose following the established practice of the First Committee, because when we look at the established practice of the First Committee, we recognize that, after the general debate, the First Committee has always started the thematic discussion with nuclear weapons, indicating that nuclear weapons are of the utmost importance to member States.

Mr. Adejola (Nigeria): I thank you, Sir, very much for those detailed highlights. My delegation wishes only to request a clarification now. During the briefing, you said that the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions advised that the phrase "within available resources" should be avoided. I am not sure whether the Committee wants us to explore some other phrase. If we do not request that action is taken "within available resources", I would like to know how they want us to proceed.

Mr. Aljowaily (Egypt): I congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chair, and express our full confidence in your stewardship of the work of the First Committee. I am confident that you will steer us to a successful conclusion.

We have listened carefully to the previous two interventions by our colleagues from Iran and Nigeria, and we will be happy to go along with the formulation that seems best in the light of former practice, but also with one in line with the papers that have been distributed to us. We will be happy to go with the formulation that

seems best and that enjoys the consensus of the current members.

My question, Sir, has to do with what we have just heard from you now regarding the topic of the exchange with the High Representative and other high-level officials. If I understood correctly, that topic concerns strengthening the capacity of international organizations to deal with weapons of mass destruction. I note that there is, unfortunately, no international organization whose mandate is nuclear disarmament, which to us in Egypt — and I think to the Non-Aligned Movement and the States attending the special sessions of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament — is a matter of the highest priority. I am afraid that the proposed wording or formulation may put nuclear disarmament at a disadvantage compared to chemical weapons and biological weapons, which have treaties prohibiting them.

I would plead with you, Sir, and with our colleagues that, if that is the proposal, we either stick to the formulation that we have used before, now outlined in A/C.1/69/CRP.2, or we amend the specific topic in a way that does not put nuclear disarmament at a disadvantage compared to the other weapons of mass destruction on the grounds that it lacks an international organization fully devoted to the prohibition of those horrible weapons. We are in your hands, Sir. We can either stick with the formulation in A/C.1/69/CRP.2 or we can further amend and refine the language on that specific topic in a way that ensures that nuclear disarmament remains, as was stated by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, the first priority for the disarmament discourse.

Ms. Benhabouche (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): As this is the first time that my delegation has taken the floor at this session, allow me to convey to you, Sir, the congratulations of my delegation on your election to the chairmanship of the Committee for the sixty-ninth session. My congratulations go also to the other members of the Bureau.

I will focus on document A/C.1/69/CRP.2 regarding the draft programme of work. In CRP.2 we see a reduction in the number of meetings for the debate. Formerly there were 12, as was agreed upon by the First Committee and reflected in document A/68/589, of 2013. That has been reduced to 11 meetings. Twelve meetings were decided on, with the inclusion of 6 October, which

is a holiday. My delegation would like information on the rationale behind the proposed reduction to 11.

The Chair: I thank colleagues for their questions. Allow me to take them one by one, starting with that of the representative of Nigeria.

The question with respect to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions will be addressed fully at the technical briefing that follows immediately after this meeting. I take the point of the representative of Egypt regarding the nuclear issue and will take it under advisement for further consideration. I would point out to the representative of Algeria that the number of meetings that have been scheduled for this session, 11, represents an increase. Only 10 meetings were scheduled last year, so we have increased the number of meetings by one.

In respect of the first comment we heard from the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, I hereby propose to the membership of the Committee that we proceed in accordance with the provisional programme of work and timetable that members have before them in document A/C.1/69/CRP.1 and the indicative timetable appended to it, A/C.1/69/CRP.2, which are proposed to the Committee for adoption.

Mr. Robotjazi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Would you please repeat the last proposal that you made with regard to the indicative timetable, Sir?

The Chair: Let me repeat, I am proposing to the Committee that we proceed in accordance with the provisional programme of work and timetable contained in document A/C.1/69/CRP.1 and the indicative timetable as written and as members have in front of them in document A/C.1/69/CRP.2.

Mr. Robotjazi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. Chairman, my delegation raised a concern with regard to the indicative timetable that you have proposed in document A/C.1/69/CRP.2, and we specifically propose to follow the established practice of the First Committee and to take up the discussion on nuclear weapons as the first issue in the thematic discussion of the First Committee this year.

The Chair: The Chair proposes that that comment be taken into consideration on the understanding that any decisions on changes that may need to be made will be taken after further consideration.

Mr. Aljowaily (Egypt): We have listened to the second intervention by my colleague from Iran and your kind response as well, Sir. If it is at all helpful, perhaps, when the timetable is up for finalization, we could put in an asterisk, as I think we have done before, as a footnote stating that any change from established practice for the actual ordering of the themes for the thematic discussion does not in any way represent a precedent for future sessions of the First Committee. We have the two options of either reverting to the established practice — or at least the practice that has been followed in earlier sessions of this Committee— or keeping it as is and putting in that footnote. We are just trying to offer ideas that may help to forge consensus on the issue.

Mr. Robotjazi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Regarding your comments, Mr. Chair, I did not see any objection to the proposal to deal specifically with nuclear weapons as the first topic of the thematic debate of the First Committee, so I repeat my specific proposal once again, which is to follow the established practice of the First Committee. We need to have an understanding that the thematic discussion on disarmament machinery will be dealt with after the thematic discussion on nuclear weapons.

The Chair: Allow me to make myself very clear on this issue. The proposal that has just been made will be taken under advisement and given due consideration, and the decision of the Chair will be communicated to the Committee at its next sitting on Tuesday of next week. I hope that is clear to all.

Mr. Wensley (South Africa): I just wish to express the view that we fully agree with our colleague from the Islamic Republic of Iran that we have traditionally started the thematic debate with the issue of nuclear weapons. The disarmament machinery usually comes much later in our thematic debates. I also go along with our colleague from Egypt, who has suggested an elegant way out of the problem by putting an asterisk next to the item, with a footnote stating that we will consider that issue as a departure from the debate but as in no way setting a precedent for future First Committee sessions. We are in your hands, Sir. You have said that you will take this under advisement, and we will wait until Tuesday when you come back to us.

The Chair: May I take it that the Committee wishes to proceed in accordance with the provisional programme of work and timetable contained in

document A/C.1/69/CRP.1 and that the Committee will further allow the Chair to take the matter relating to document A/C.1/69/CRP.2 under advisement, giving it full consideration, and a decision on it will be made and announced at its next sitting?

It was so decided.

The Chair: In order to make full use of the time and facilities allocated to the Committee, I intend to begin our meetings promptly at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., and to end at 1 p.m. and 6 p.m., respectively. I am sure that I can count on representatives' support and cooperation in that regard.

I should also like to draw attention to agenda item 5, entitled "Election of the officers of the Main Committees", and to rule 99 (a) of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, which reads as follows:

"All the Main Committees shall, at least three months before the opening of the session, elect a Chairman. Elections of the other officers provided for in rule 103 shall be held at the latest by the end of the first week of the session."

In the light of that provision, I propose that the First Committee consider this item some time in May or June 2015, about three months before the opening of the seventieth session of the General Assembly. If I hear no objection, may I take it that the Committee wishes to proceed accordingly?

It was so decided.

The Chair: Let me now draw the Committee's attention to document A/C.1/69/INF/4, containing the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolution 68/307, of 10 September 2014, on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, as highlighted in the report of the General Committee, which was considered by the Assembly at its second plenary meeting. In particular, in paragraph 14 of the resolution, the General Assembly

"Requests each Main Committee to further discuss its working methods at the beginning of every session, and in this regard invites the Chairs of the Main Committees to brief the Ad Hoc Working Group during the sixty-ninth session on any best practices and lessons learned with a view to improving working methods, as appropriate".

I should therefore like to encourage all delegations to share their thoughts and recommendations on those provisions during their interventions.

In accordance with the programme of work and timetable contained in document A/C.1/69/CRP.1, the

Committee will begin its substantive work on Tuesday, 7 October, at 10 a.m. sharp in this Conference Room. In closing, may I say that I look forward to working with all members in the coming weeks.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.