

United Nations
**GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**

FIFTEENTH SESSION

Official Records



**SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE, 189th
MEETING**

Wednesday, 2 November 1960,
at 3.30 p.m.

NEW YORK

CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <i>Agenda item 23:</i> | |
| <i>Question of an increase in the membership of the Security Council and of the Economic and Social Council (continued)</i> | <i>67</i> |

Chairman: Mr. Carlet R. AUGUSTE (Haiti).

AGENDA ITEM 23

Question of an increase in the membership of the Security Council and of the Economic and Social Council (continued)

1. Mr. JANTUAH (Ghana) said that the character of the United Nations had completely changed with the admission of so many new nations. It was generally agreed that the change should be reflected in its organs and agencies, particularly in the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council, whose present composition was unbalanced and unrealistic. That would mean amending Articles 23 and 61 of the Charter and Article 3 of the Statute of the International Court of Justice, which fixed the composition of the various bodies. Since the Charter could be amended only with the consent of two-thirds of the Members of the United Nations, including all permanent members of the Security Council, the final decision lay with five States. Their attitude to the small uncommitted nations was usually governed by their own national interests. Although both the Soviet Union and the United States wanted a revision of the Charter, they made it impossible for reasons of national policy. The Soviet Union would veto any revision until the Government of the People's Republic of China was admitted to the United Nations. The United States used what was almost a veto by still blindly keeping China out. The attitude of the two Powers supported the argument for revision, not only of the membership of some organs, but of certain aspects of the structure of the United Nations, as suggested by the President of Ghana in the General Assembly (869th plenary meeting).

2. Although the United Nations was called "international", a minority in it could impose its will through the principal organs, including the Security Council, which alone could apply sanctions.

3. Many Members felt that their security was threatened by the presence of a representative whom they could not accept as the rightful representative of China. China's permanent seat might well be given to another Asian country, such as India.

4. A permanent seat in the Security Council should also be created for Africa, because of the growing number of African Members of the United Nations and the importance of Africa in world affairs. The African

personality should be given full expression for the good of the world: it should also be associated with the veto, if the veto were kept.

5. Representatives of less developed African and Asian countries were often told that they should concentrate on a redistribution of seats in the Economic and Social Council. But there could be no true economic or social development without peace and security. For instance, no part of Africa could develop properly while the Congo was threatened by imperialist aggression. All the organs of the United Nations must therefore be truly universal.

6. Since it seemed impossible for the moment to enlarge the United Nations Councils and similar institutions, the Ghana delegation was forced to urge that the existing seats should be redistributed, to reflect Members' contributions to peace and security and equitable geographical distribution.

7. Mr. TCHOBANOV (Bulgaria) said that it was an undisputed fact that any decision to enlarge the membership of the Security Council and of the Economic and Social Council would require the revision of the Charter. In order to take effect, amendments to the Charter must be ratified by two-thirds of the Members of the United Nations, including all the permanent members of the Security Council. However, one of them, one of the founding Members of the Organization, a nation whose population constituted one fourth of the whole human race, had by dubious manoeuvring been excluded from year to year, while its place was usurped by a puppet government only kept in power by the United States Seventh Fleet. The United States had again succeeded in preventing the question of the representation of China from being discussed at the current session of the General Assembly, but the automatic majority in support of the United States position was diminishing fast and it could not be long before the real fifth permanent member of the Security Council resumed its rightful place. It would then be possible to consider bringing the Charter up to date and making the amendments called for by the changes that had taken place in the world since it was first adopted. Any attempt to revise the Charter when the most essential requirement for such a revision was lacking, owing to the ill-will of the United States, would only prolong the unjust and illegal situation.

8. The Bulgarian delegation had no doubt of the good faith of those African and Asian delegations which were anxious to amend the Charter so that the membership of the two principal organs of the United Nations could be increased and their continents fairly represented. However, there were other delegations which pressed for the amendment of the Charter for very different reasons. There had been open attacks by the Western Powers on the principle enshrined in Article 27, paragraph 3 of the Charter. Several attempts had been made, both directly and indirectly, to get rid of the so-

called "veto" and no doubt there would be more in the Special Political Committee itself in connexion with the item under discussion. The Bulgarian view was the same as it had been at the fourteenth session, namely that the provision was as equitable and necessary now as it had been when the Charter was first drafted. It had been recognized then that the great Powers which had played the chief role in the coalition against Hitler had a special responsibility for the maintenance of world peace and would have a special part to play in that respect in future. The unanimity rule had also been necessary in order to prevent one of those great Powers from imposing its will, through an automatic majority, in matters which were of vital concern to the minority. If one great Power was able to force upon another decisions which it regarded as incompatible with its basic view of world affairs and its most vital interests, the entire Organization would crumble and international peace would be endangered.

9. There had been cases in which the United States, through the docile automatic majority at its command, had succeeded in forcing through undesirable and dangerous decisions. He would recall only the occasion on which the Philippines, in defiance of the 1946 gentleman's agreement, had been elected a non-permanent member of the Security Council to represent the Eastern European countries. The United States had so abused its automatic majority that the socialist countries would have to be extremely naïve to renounce the unanimity rule in the present circumstances.

10. Neither the United Nations nor the world was homogeneous in its composition. In recent years, a third group had sprung up beside the two great world systems of capitalism and socialism. The newly independent States of Africa and Asia now formed the new group of uncommitted nations. The United Nations could not function properly if one of the three groups succeeded, on a purely arithmetical basis, in imposing its will on the other two. If the United Nations was to serve as an instrument for peace, its operations must be based on the agreement of the three world groups. Thus, far from being outworn and harmful, as some speakers had alleged, the unanimity rule was a sound principle.

11. The United States, of course, took quite a different view. Since its foundation, the United States had regarded the United Nations as a tool which would help it to attain world domination. It preferred to impose its will through the automatic majority it commanded temporarily rather than form an equal partnership with States having differing economic and political systems. In the circumstances, the Bulgarian delegation would oppose any attempt, direct or indirect, to eliminate the safeguard contained in Article 27, paragraph 3 of the Charter.

12. Nevertheless, there had been sufficient changes in the world in the past fifteen years to make it necessary to amend the Charter. Mr. N. S. Khrushchev had made a masterly analysis (882nd plenary meeting) of those changes in the General Assembly. One thousand million human beings had chosen to live under a new economic and social order, in which production and standards of living and culture had risen at an unprecedented rate, opening up vast and brilliant prospects for the future. During the same period, a further 1,000 million human beings had thrown off the colonial yoke and won national independence. The young in-

dependent States, anxious to rid themselves of the legacy of imperialism, had for the most part adopted a neutralist position in international affairs.

13. The socialist and neutralist countries did not wish to dominate the United Nations or to have a privileged position in it. They merely wanted equality with the imperialist group. The entire United Nations must be reorganized so that those three basic groups would have equal rights in all its organs, including the Secretariat. The tragic situation in the Congo had brought to light defects in that system which could not be allowed to persist any longer. The concentration of the powers of the Secretary-General in a single person had had particularly unfortunate effects. In the case in point, Mr. Hammarskjöld had acted as the representative of only one group, at the expense of the other two. It was his failure to be impartial which had led the United Arab Republic, Ghana and Guinea to state at one point that unless the Commander-in-Chief of the United Nations Forces in the Congo altered his attitude, they would be compelled to withdraw their forces and place them directly at the disposal of the lawful Government of the Congo. The representative of Guinea had spoken in the General Assembly (861st plenary meeting) of the flagrant contradiction between the spirit of the three Security Council resolutions^{1/} and the actions of the United Nations Secretariat. Since the Secretary-General had assumed responsibility for the action of his subordinates in the Congo, that reflected on him. The fact was that, as it stood, the Secretariat was not capable of fulfilling the task entrusted to it. Both the legislative and executive branches of the United Nations must, therefore, be reorganized on the basis of parity between the three major world groups, with all three having equal rights and opportunities, and all vital questions being solved by agreement between them.

14. Mr. BEELEY (United Kingdom) said that the suggestion that three groups of States, the capitalist, socialist and neutralist groups, formed the United Nations and should be equally represented in its main organs ignored the real structure of the Organization and contradicted Article 2, paragraph 1, of the Charter. Moreover, Members would not wish to be dragged into joining one or other of such groups.

15. The African and Asian States were the largest body of Members, with the greatest number of new Members and the most serious complaint of under-representation. They had two of the six non-permanent seats in the Security Council, one of which was the Commonwealth seat. It could not be considered as belonging to the African-Asian nations, since that would disenfranchise other Commonwealth countries.

16. While he agreed with the Nigerian representative (187th meeting) that on both Councils the present situation did not accurately reflect the Membership of the Organization, he could not agree that because of an allegedly insuperable obstacle to the amendment of the Charter, the existing seats should be redistributed. The obstacle to redistribution might prove equally difficult to remove. In any case it was not fair to ask older Members to forgo their existing rights. In enlarging the Councils care would have to be taken that increased size did not make them unwieldy and less efficient.

^{1/} See *Official Records of the Security Council, Fifteenth Year, Supplement for July, August and September 1960*, resolutions S/4387, S/4405, and S/4426.

17. The straightforward constitutional and logical way to satisfy the new Members was being blocked because one Member, with the power of veto, would do nothing until its irrelevant demand that the representation of China be changed had been met.

18. The United Kingdom delegation thought that both Councils should be enlarged, and that conditions were now favourable for enlarging at least the Economic and Social Council. If two-thirds of the Members of the United Nations voted for the amendment and ratified it, he could not believe the Soviet Government would refuse to do so. The constitutional process of ratification need not take long. He appealed to the Soviet Union delegation to reconsider its attitude in the light of the general opinion in favour of amendment.

19. Mr. SUBASINGHE (Ceylon) said that although in the last analysis the maintenance of peace was dependent on the policies and conduct of the great Powers, the United Nations offered a medium through which the smaller Powers too could make their influence felt. Thus their approach to the question of the composition of its principal organs reflected both their own national interests and the interests of the world community. Although they were now Members of the United Nations, there was a growing feeling that the structure of the Organization did not adequately reflect the changes which had taken place. There had been objections to the use of the word "groups" in connexion with States Members of the United Nations; he would like to be able to think that Members were not working in groups, but unfortunately it could not be denied that such was the case.

20. Out of devotion to the principle of universality of representation in the United Nations, his Government urged that China should be correctly represented and that adequate provision should be made for participation by the African and Asian countries in the work of the various United Nations organs. If that principle was carried to its logical conclusion, the question of the composition of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council would be solved automatically. Ceylon was strongly in favour of expanding the membership of those organs not only in the interests of the economic development of under-developed countries but also because that question was closely linked to the problem of the maintenance of world peace and security. The need for expansion had existed even before the admission of the new Member States. Asia, for example, had not actually had representation of a permanent kind on either Council, since the so-called Asian representation had not been effective. Nor had the African and Asian countries been adequately represented among the non-permanent members. The imbalance was becoming more marked as new countries joined the United Nations. Redistribution of the existing seats would be unfair to older Members; moreover, the representation it would give to the African and Asian Members would still be insufficient and it would thus encourage a spirit of competition among them which should be avoided.

21. If all the other members of the Committee were prepared to call for amendment of the Charter in the

specific case of the membership of the Councils, his delegation would vote in favour of such a proposal. Similarly, if they all agreed to call for a redistribution of the existing seats his delegation would go along with them, however unsatisfactory it considered that solution to be. It would not, however, be in favour of a draft resolution that failed to win the unanimous support of the Committee, for even if such a resolution were adopted it could not be carried out if it was objected to by any of the permanent members of the Security Council. The problem was essentially one that could be solved by agreement among the major Powers, particularly the USSR and the United States, and he appealed to them once again to try to reach a satisfactory settlement.

22. Mr. MILLET (France) said that the problem before the Committee was essentially a technical one, and such political implications as it had should be viewed in the context of the substantial increase in the membership of the United Nations which had taken place over the past five years rather than from a narrow partisan angle. Regrettably, the USSR had not only prevented the United Nations from making any progress in the matter by invoking for purely political reasons the question of the admission of Communist China; it was now making matters worse by raising the question of revising the entire structure of the United Nations. That obstructionist policy was all the more unfortunate in that some thirty new Members had been admitted to the United Nations since 1956. His own delegation's position was that an increase in the membership of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council would be a logical consequence of the increase in the Membership of the Organization, provided it did not imperil efficiency. His delegation was opposed to a redistribution of the existing seats for the reasons just given by the representative of the United Kingdom. In the case of the Economic and Social Council the membership should be increased to twenty-four, bringing it into line with the membership of some of its technical committees and providing more equitable representation for the areas from which the new Members of the Organization came, particularly the African Members, to whom problems of economic development were of paramount concern. If the USSR was now so anxious to have changes made in the structure of the Organization it might begin by agreeing to urgently needed smaller changes which would have an immediate practical effect. The USSR delegation's position, which would seem to be based on a desire to discredit the United Nations and prevent it from making any improvements, could only stand in the way of progress.

23. What was now at stake was not only a desirable increase in the membership of the Councils but also the problem of the adverse effect which failure by the United Nations to solve such a simple problem would have on public opinion, particularly in the newly independent countries.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.