

GENERAL ASSEMBLY



- 9 1980

ANNEXES

THIRTY-FOURTH SESSION

Official Records

NEW YORK, 1979

Agenda item 113:* Drafting of an international convention against the taking of hostages: report of the *Ad Hoc* Committee on the Drafting of an International Convention against the Taking of Hostages**

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* For the discussion of this item, see *Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-fourth Session, Sixth Committee, 4th, 11th to 15th, 53rd, 56th, 58th, 59th, 60th, 61st and 62nd meetings; ibid., Sixth Committee, Sessional Fascicle, corrigendum; and ibid., Plenary Meetings, 105th meeting.*

** This question was previously discussed by the General Assembly at its thirty-first session (agenda item 123), at its thirty-second session (item 119) and at its thirty-third session (item 120).

DOCUMENT A/34/819

Report of the Sixth Committee

[Original: Arabic/Chinese/English/
French/Russian/Spanish]
[13 December 1979]

1. The item entitled "Drafting of an international convention against the taking of hostages" was included in the agenda of the thirty-first session of the General Assembly at the request of the Federal Republic of Germany.¹ At that session, the Assembly, by its resolution 31/103 of 15 December 1976, adopted on the recommendation of the Sixth Committee, decided to establish an *Ad Hoc* Committee on the Drafting of an International Convention against the Taking of Hostages and requested it to draft at the earliest possible date an international convention against the taking of hostages, as well as to submit its report and to make every effort to submit a draft convention to the Assembly in good time for consideration at its thirty-second session.

2. The *Ad Hoc* Committee² held its 1977 session in New York and submitted its report to the General Assembly at its thirty-second session.³ At that session, the Assembly, on the recommendation of the Sixth Committee, adopted resolution 32/148 of 16 December 1977 by which it decided that the *Ad Hoc* Committee, having been unable to complete the mandate given to it within the allocated time, should continue its work in accordance with resolution 31/103.

3. The *Ad Hoc* Committee held its 1978 session at Geneva and submitted its report to the General Assembly at its thirty-third session.⁴ At that session, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the Sixth Committee, adopted resolution 33/19 of 29 November 1978 by which it again decided to renew the mandate of the *Ad Hoc* Committee.

4. The *Ad Hoc* Committee held its 1979 session at Geneva and submitted its report to the General Assembly at its thirty-fourth session (A/34/39). That report contained the draft of an international convention against the taking of hostages which the Committee recommended to the Assembly for further consideration and adoption (*ibid.*, sect. IV).

5. At the 4th plenary meeting on 21 September 1979, the General Assembly decided to include the relevant item in its agenda and to allocate it to the Sixth Committee.

6. At its 3rd meeting, on 26 September, the Sixth Committee agreed that the draft Convention prepared by the *Ad Hoc* Committee would, after initial consideration within the Sixth Committee, be referred to a Working Group which would review it on an article by article basis and would report back to the Sixth Committee at a later stage.

7. At its 4th meeting, on the same day, the Sixth Committee decided that the Working Group would be made up of those States which were members of the *Ad Hoc* Committee,⁵ with the understanding that its membership would be open-ended.

8. The initial consideration of the draft Convention by the Sixth Committee took place at the 4th and 12th

¹ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-first Session, Annexes*, agenda item 123, document A/31/242.

² The *Ad Hoc* Committee is composed of the following 35 Member States: Algeria, Barbados, Bulgaria, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Canada, Chile, Democratic Yemen, Denmark, Egypt, France, Germany, Federal Republic of, Guinea, Iran, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mexico, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Philippines, Poland, Somalia, Suriname, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America, Venezuela and Yugoslavia.

³ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-second Session, Supplement No. 39.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, *Thirty-third Session, Supplement No. 39* and corrigendum.

⁵ See note 2 above.

to 15th meetings, held on 26 September and from 8 to 11 October 1979.

9. At its 53rd meeting, on 27 November, the Sixth Committee resumed its consideration of the item on the basis of the report of the Working Group (A/C.6/34/L.12). The report was introduced by the Chairman-Rapporteur of the Working Group, Mr. Klaus Zehentner (Federal Republic of Germany) who described and explained the changes which the Group had made in the draft prepared by the *Ad Hoc* Committee. He also drew the attention of the Committee to a new text for the third and fourth preambular paragraphs (A/C.6/34/L.14), which was the result of informal consultations carried out after the conclusion of the work of the Working Group (see A/C.6/34/SR.53, paras. 14-40).

10. At the same meeting, the Chairman of the Sixth Committee informed the Committee of the contents of a letter he had received, with reference to the draft Convention as prepared by the Working Group, from the delegate to international organizations of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

11. Subsequently, following an editorial review which was carried out by an informal group of delegations under the chairmanship of the Chairman-Rapporteur of the Working Group, corrigenda (A/C.6/34/L.12/Corr.2 (Arabic only), Corr.3 (Chinese only), Corr.4 (English only), Corr.5 (French only), Corr.6 (Russian only) and Corr.7 (Spanish only)) were issued to the report of the Working Group with a view to eliminating minor inconsistencies and discrepancies between the various language versions.

12. Statements concerning the report of the Working Group were made at the 53rd, 56th, 58th, 59th, 61st and 62nd meetings, held between 27 November and 7 December.

13. At the 60th meeting, on 5 December, the representative of the Federal Republic of Germany introduced a draft resolution (A/C.6/34/L.23) to which was annexed the final draft of the International Convention against the Taking of Hostages (A/C.6/34/L.23/Add.1) (for the texts, see para. 16 below).

14. At the 62nd meeting, on 7 December, the Committee voted on the draft resolution and its annex, as follows:⁶

(a) Article 9 of the draft was adopted by a recorded vote of 103 to 10, with 4 abstentions. The voting was as follows:

In favour: Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Bhutan, Brazil, Burma, Burundi, Canada, Central African Republic, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Democratic Yemen, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Germany, Federal Republic of, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Ivory Coast, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Spain, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of

Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Cameroon, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America, Upper Volta, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zaire, Zambia.

Against: Bulgaria, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Mongolia, Poland, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Abstaining: Botswana, Congo, Romania, Viet Nam.

(b) The draft resolution and its annex, as a whole, were adopted without a vote.

15. Statements in explanation of vote before the vote were made by the representatives of Ecuador, Venezuela, Algeria, Yugoslavia, France, Mali and China, and after the vote by the representatives of Poland, the Netherlands, Romania, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Chile, Bulgaria, Cuba, Botswana and Colombia. A statement in connexion with the above-mentioned decision was made by the representative of Israel.

Recommendation of the Sixth Committee

16. The Sixth Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION AGAINST THE TAKING OF HOSTAGES

The General Assembly,

Considering that the progressive development of international law and its codification contribute to the implementation of the purposes and principles set forth in Articles 1 and 2 of the Charter of the United Nations,

Mindful of the need to conclude, under the auspices of the United Nations, an international convention against the taking of hostages,

Recalling its resolution 31/103 of 15 December 1976, by which it established the *Ad Hoc* Committee on the Drafting of an International Convention against the Taking of Hostages and requested it to draft at the earliest possible date an international convention against the taking of hostages,

Further recalling its resolutions 32/148 of 16 December 1977 and 33/19 of 29 November 1978,

Having considered the draft Convention prepared by the *Ad Hoc* Committee in pursuance of the above-mentioned resolutions (see A/34/39, sect. IV),

Adopts and opens for signature and ratification or for accession the International Convention against the Taking of Hostages, the text of which is annexed to the present resolution.

ANNEX

International Convention against the Taking of Hostages

The States Parties to this Convention,

Having in mind the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations concerning the maintenance of international peace and security and the promotion of friendly relations and co-operation among States,

Recognizing, in particular, that everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person, as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights⁷ and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,⁸

Reaffirming the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples as enshrined in the Charter of the United

⁶ The representative of Israel and the Lao People's Democratic Republic indicated that they were not participating in the vote.

⁷ General Assembly resolution 217 A (III).

⁸ General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

Nations and the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations,⁹ as well as in other relevant resolutions of the General Assembly,

Considering that the taking of hostages is an offence of grave concern to the international community and that, in accordance with the provisions of this Convention, any person committing an act of hostage-taking shall be either prosecuted or extradited,

Being convinced that it is urgently necessary to develop international co-operation between States in devising and adopting effective measures for the prevention, prosecution and punishment of all acts of taking of hostages as manifestations of international terrorism,

Have agreed as follows:

Article 1

1. Any person who seizes or detains and threatens to kill, to injure or to continue to detain another person (hereinafter referred to as the "hostage") in order to compel a third party, namely, a State, an international intergovernmental organization, a natural or juridical person, or a group of persons, to do or abstain from doing any act as an explicit or implicit condition for the release of the hostage commits the offence of taking of hostages ("hostage-taking") within the meaning of this Convention.

2. Any person who:

(a) Attempts to commit an act of hostage-taking, or

(b) Participates as an accomplice of anyone who commits or attempts to commit an act of hostage-taking

likewise commits an offence for the purposes of this Convention.

Article 2

Each State Party shall make the offences set forth in article 1 punishable by appropriate penalties which take into account the grave nature of those offences.

Article 3

1. The State Party in the territory of which the hostage is held by the offender shall take all measures it considers appropriate to ease the situation of the hostage, in particular, to secure his release and, after his release, to facilitate, when relevant, his departure.

2. If any object which the offender has obtained as a result of the taking of hostages comes into the custody of a State Party, that State Party shall return it as soon as possible to the hostage or the third party referred to in article 1, as the case may be, or to the appropriate authorities thereof.

Article 4

States Parties shall co-operate in the prevention of the offences set forth in article 1, particularly by:

(a) Taking all practicable measures to prevent preparations in their respective territories for the commission of those offences within or outside their territories, including measures to prohibit in their territories illegal activities of persons, groups and organizations that encourage, instigate, organize or engage in the perpetration of acts of taking of hostages;

(b) Exchanging information and co-ordinating the taking of administrative and other measures as appropriate to prevent the commission of those offences.

Article 5

1. Each State Party shall take such measures as may be necessary to establish its jurisdiction over any of the offences set forth in article 1 which are committed:

(a) In its territory or on board a ship or aircraft registered in that State;

(b) By any of its nationals or, if that State considers it appropriate, by those stateless persons who have their habitual residence in its territory;

(c) In order to compel that State to do or abstain from doing any act; or

(d) With respect to a hostage who is a national of that State, if that State considers it appropriate.

⁹ General Assembly resolution 2625 (XXV), annex.

2. Each State Party shall likewise take such measures as may be necessary to establish its jurisdiction over the offences set forth in article 1 in cases where the alleged offender is present in its territory and it does not extradite him to any of the States mentioned in paragraph 1 of this article.

3. This Convention does not exclude any criminal jurisdiction exercised in accordance with internal law.

Article 6

1. Upon being satisfied that the circumstances so warrant, any State Party in the territory of which the alleged offender is present shall, in accordance with its laws, take him into custody or take other measures to ensure his presence for such time as is necessary to enable any criminal or extradition proceedings to be instituted. That State Party shall immediately make a preliminary inquiry into the facts.

2. The custody or other measures referred to in paragraph 1 of this article shall be notified without delay directly or through the Secretary-General of the United Nations to:

(a) The State where the offence was committed;

(b) The State against which compulsion has been directed or attempted;

(c) The State of which the natural or juridical person against whom compulsion has been directed or attempted is a national;

(d) The State of which the hostage is a national or in the territory of which he has his habitual residence;

(e) The State of which the alleged offender is a national or, if he is a stateless person, in the territory of which he has his habitual residence;

(f) The international intergovernmental organization against which compulsion has been directed or attempted;

(g) All other States concerned.

3. Any person regarding whom the measures referred to in paragraph 1 of this article are being taken shall be entitled:

(a) To communicate without delay with the nearest appropriate representative of the State of which he is a national or which is otherwise entitled to establish such communication or, if he is a stateless person, the State in the territory of which he has his habitual residence;

(b) To be visited by a representative of that State.

4. The rights referred to in paragraph 3 of this article shall be exercised in conformity with the laws and regulations of the State in the territory of which the alleged offender is present, subject to the proviso, however, that the said laws and regulations must enable full effect to be given to the purposes for which the rights accorded under paragraph 3 of this article are intended.

5. The provisions of paragraphs 3 and 4 of this article shall be without prejudice to the right of any State Party having a claim to jurisdiction in accordance with paragraph 1 (b) of article 5 to invite the International Committee of the Red Cross to communicate with and visit the alleged offender.

6. The State which makes the preliminary inquiry contemplated in paragraph 1 of this article shall promptly report its findings to the States or organization referred to in paragraph 2 of this article and indicate whether it intends to exercise jurisdiction.

Article 7

The State Party where the alleged offender is prosecuted shall, in accordance with its laws, communicate the final outcome of the proceedings to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who shall transmit the information to the other States concerned and the international intergovernmental organizations concerned.

Article 8

1. The State Party in the territory of which the alleged offender is found shall, if it does not extradite him, be obliged, without exception whatsoever and whether or not the offence was committed in its territory, to submit the case to its competent authorities for the purpose of prosecution, through proceedings in accordance with the laws of that State. Those authorities shall take their decision in the same manner as in the case of any ordinary offence of a grave nature under the law of that State.

2. Any person regarding whom proceedings are being carried out in connexion with any of the offences set forth in article 1 shall be guaranteed fair treatment at all stages of the proceedings, including enjoyment of all the rights and guarantees provided by the law of the State in the territory of which he is present.

Article 9

1. A request for the extradition of an alleged offender, pursuant to this Convention, shall not be granted if the requested State Party has substantial grounds for believing:

- (a) That the request for extradition for an offence set forth in article 1 has been made for the purpose of prosecuting or punishing a person on account of his race, religion, nationality, ethnic origin or political opinion; or
- (b) That the person's position may be prejudiced:
 - (i) For any of the reasons mentioned in subparagraph (a) of this paragraph, or
 - (ii) For the reason that communication with him by the appropriate authorities of the State entitled to exercise rights of protection cannot be effected.

2. With respect to the offences as defined in this Convention, the provisions of all extradition treaties and arrangements applicable between States Parties are modified as between States Parties to the extent that they are incompatible with this Convention.

Article 10

1. The offences set forth in article 1 shall be deemed to be included as extraditable offences in any extradition treaty existing between States Parties. States Parties undertake to include such offences as extraditable offences in every extradition treaty to be concluded between them.

2. If a State Party which makes extradition conditional on the existence of a treaty receives a request for extradition from another State Party with which it has no extradition treaty, the requested State may at its option consider this Convention as the legal basis for extradition in respect of the offences set forth in article 1. Extradition shall be subject to the other conditions provided by the law of the requested State.

3. States Parties which do not make extradition conditional on the existence of a treaty shall recognize the offences set forth in article 1 as extraditable offences between themselves, subject to the conditions provided by the law of the requested State.

4. The offences set forth in article 1 shall be treated, for the purpose of extradition between States Parties, as if they had been committed not only in the place in which they occurred but also in the territories of the States required to establish their jurisdiction in accordance with paragraph 1 of article 5.

Article 11

1. States Parties shall afford one another the greatest measure of assistance in connexion with criminal proceedings brought in respect of the offences set forth in article 1, including the supply of all evidence at their disposal necessary for the proceedings.

2. The provisions of paragraph 1 of this article shall not affect obligations concerning mutual judicial assistance embodied in any other treaty.

Article 12

In so far as the Geneva Conventions of 1949 for the protection of war victims¹⁰ or the Protocols Additional to those Conventions are applicable to a particular act of hostage-taking, and in so far as States Parties to this Convention are bound under those conventions to prosecute or hand over the hostage-taker, the present Convention shall not apply to an act of hostage-taking committed in the course of armed conflicts as defined in the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Protocols thereto, including armed conflicts, mentioned in article 1, paragraph 4, of Additional Protocol I of 1977,¹¹ in which peoples are fighting against colonial domination and alien occupation and against racist régimes in the exercise of their right of self-determination, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

¹⁰ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, Nos. 970-973.

¹¹ A/32/144, annex I.

Article 13

This Convention shall not apply where the offence is committed within a single State, the hostage and the alleged offender are nationals of that State and the alleged offender is found in the territory of that State.

Article 14

Nothing in this Convention shall be construed as justifying the violation of the territorial integrity or political independence of a State in contravention of the Charter of the United Nations.

Article 15

The provisions of this Convention shall not affect the application of the Treaties on Asylum, in force at the date of the adoption of this Convention, as between the States which are parties to those Treaties; but a State Party to this Convention may not invoke those Treaties with respect to another State Party to this Convention which is not a party to those treaties.

Article 16

1. Any dispute between two or more States Parties concerning the interpretation or application of this Convention which is not settled by negotiation shall, at the request of one of them, be submitted to arbitration. If within six months from the date of the request for arbitration the parties are unable to agree on the organization of the arbitration, any one of those parties may refer the dispute to the International Court of Justice by request in conformity with the Statute of the Court.

2. Each State may at the time of signature or ratification of this Convention or accession thereto declare that it does not consider itself bound by paragraph 1 of this article. The other States Parties shall not be bound by paragraph 1 of this article with respect to any State Party which has made such a reservation.

3. Any State Party which has made a reservation in accordance with paragraph 2 of this article may at any time withdraw that reservation by notification to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Article 17

1. This Convention is open for signature by all States until 31 December 1980 at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

2. This Convention is subject to ratification. The instruments of ratification shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

3. This Convention is open for accession by any State. The instruments of accession shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Article 18

1. This Convention shall enter into force on the thirtieth day following the date of deposit of the twenty-second instrument of ratification or accession with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

2. For each State ratifying or acceding to the Convention after the deposit of the twenty-second instrument of ratification or accession, the Convention shall enter into force on the thirtieth day after deposit by such State of its instrument of ratification or accession.

Article 19

1. Any State Party may denounce this Convention by written notification to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

2. Denunciation shall take effect one year following the date on which notification is received by the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Article 20

The original of this Convention, of which the Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish texts are equally authentic, shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who shall send certified copies thereof to all States.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the undersigned, being duly authorized thereto by their respective Governments, have signed this Convention, opened for signature at New York on ...¹²

¹² The Convention was opened for signature on 18 December 1979.

ACTION TAKEN BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

At its 105th plenary meeting, on 17 December 1979, the General Assembly voted on the draft resolution submitted by the Sixth Committee in its report (A/34/819, para. 16). A separate vote having been requested on article 9 of the annex, that article was adopted by a recorded vote of 125 to 10, with 3 abstentions, and the draft resolution, as a whole, was adopted. For the final text, see resolution 34/146.¹⁸

¹⁸ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 46*.

CHECK LIST OF DOCUMENTS

NOTE. This check list includes the documents relating to agenda item 113 which are not reproduced in the present fascicle. Unless otherwise indicated, the documents were issued in mimeographed form only.

<i>Document No.</i>	<i>Title or description</i>	<i>Observations and references</i>
A/34/39	Report of the <i>Ad Hoc</i> Committee on the Drafting of an International Convention against the Taking of Hostages	<i>Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 39</i>
A/C.6/34/L.12 and Corr.4	Report of the Working Group	
A/C.6/34/L.14	New text for the third and fourth paragraphs of the preamble of the draft Convention	
A/C.6/34/L.23 and Add.1	Draft resolution	For the sponsor and the text, see A/34/819, paras. 13 and 16