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FIRST COMMITTEE

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RATIONALIZATION OF THE WORK OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE

Working paper by the Chairman

INTRODUCTION

1. During the past years, increasing attention has been paid to the question of rationalization of the work of the First Committee. Various views have been expressed and proposals made by delegations on how to refine and streamline the work and proceedings of the Committee. On the basis of their experience and the results of their extensive consultations among the interested delegations, various former Chairmen of the First Committee have underlined the need to accelerate efforts towards facilitating a more focused discussion of and action on the issue, including rationalization of the Committee's agenda. In this context, a general understanding has prevailed that such efforts should be geared towards the realization of greater organizational clarity and coherence without sacrificing the substance of the issues or compromising the right of delegations to bring any relevant item before the Committee.

2. Consequently, the First Committee has over the years devoted some of its efforts to this matter and adopted certain concrete recommendations in this regard, such as those contained in General Assembly resolution 42/42 N of 30 November 1987. Several former Chairmen of the First Committee have also submitted papers to the Committee containing various suggestions on the issue (see for example documents A/C.1/39/9 and A/C.1/43/9).

3. As another step towards the continuing process of rationalization of the work of the First Committee, I initiated extensive consultations among delegations on the issue and held several informal open-ended meetings of the Friends of the Chairman during the current session. Taking into account various views expressed and proposals made in the course of those consultations, I am availing myself of this opportunity to set out certain proposals and suggestions, which I hope will provide a basis for further consideration of this subject-matter. In addition, it

should be noted that, in my capacity as Chairman of the Committee at the forty-fifth session, I would be available with the assistance and co-operation of the Secretariat to facilitate the necessary consultations during the interim period between now and the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly. The Committee may also wish to devote attention to the question of establishing a standing consultation group that would give consideration on a more consistent basis to issues related to the further rationalization of the work of the First Committee.

I. PROCEDURAL ASPECTS

4. The following measures could be, inter alia, instituted with regard to procedural aspects in order to further enhance the effective functioning of the First Committee:

(a) The proceedings of the Committee, under the different agenda items, should continue to be in two phases:

(i) General debate, including statements on specific agenda items;

(ii) Consideration of and action on draft resolutions;

(b) Every effort should be made to circulate the preliminary drafts of resolutions and/or decisions, via the Secretariat if possible, at an early date, even during the period of the general debate, whenever that is feasible;

(c) Delegates should be urged to limit their statements in the general debate to approximately 20 minutes, with the possibility also of making other short interventions, if necessary;

(d) The practice of grouping draft resolutions into various clusters for the purpose of taking action on them should be continued;

(e) As necessary, arrangements should be made to set aside some time during the official meetings to allow informal consultations to take place;

(f) Delegations may inform the officers of the Committee regarding their respective draft resolutions, at as early a stage as feasible, in order to facilitate the process of consultations pertaining to various draft resolutions.

II. SUBSTANTIVE ASPECTS

5. With respect to substantive aspects, the First Committee may wish to continue its ongoing consultations, which could, inter alia, focus on the following areas:

(a) The agenda could be formulated in a manner that would better reflect the concerns of Member States as well as the changing realities in the international situation;

(b) A more rational and systematic clustering of agenda items, so as to render their consideration more effective;

(c) The possible merging of those draft resolutions that are submitted on the same subject-matter;

(d) The submission of recurrent or traditional draft resolutions on a biannual or triannual basis, as feasible.

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