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Chairman: Mr. RANA (Nepal)

CONTENTS

Tribute to the memory of Sheikh Rashid Bin Saeed Al-Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and rules of Dubai

Statement by the Chairman

Election of the Vice-Chairmen and the Rapporteur

Qrganization of work

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The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF SHEIKH RASHID BIN SAEED AL-MAETOUM, VICE-PRESIDENT AND PRIME MINISTER OF THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES AND RULER OF DUBAI

The CHAIRMAN: It is with great sadness that members of the Committee have learned of the passing of His Highness Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al-Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and the Ruler of Dubai. On behalf of the Committee I should like to extend deepest condolences to the Government end peoples of the United Arab Emirates.

I now invite members of the Committee to stand and observe a minute of silence.

The members of the Committee observed a minute of silence.

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

The CHAIRMAN: Permit me to begin our proceedings by extending a warm and sincere welcome to all delegations to the First Committee of the General Assembly. For a number of years now I have had the pleasure of working with several colleagues among you, while others I have met for the first time this year. I look forward to fruitful and friendly co-operation with all of you.

At the outset I should like to state that it gives me great pleasure to express, on behalf of the members of the First Committee and on my own behalf, most sincere congratulations to the people and Government of the Republic of Namibia and to the people and Government of the Principality of Liechtenstein on their admission to membership of the United Nations. Members of the First Committee warmly welcome the representatives of Namibia and Liechtenstein in their midst and look forward to working with them in jointly promoting the noble aims and ideals embodied in the Charter of the United Nations.

Representatives will also recall that, by a note verbale dated 21 May 1990 (A/44/946), the Secretary-General communicated to the principal organs a note from the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Yemen Arab Republic end the People's

(The Chairman)

Democratic Republic of Yemen concerning the formation, as of 22 May 1990, of a single, sovereign State called the Republic of Yemen. On behalf of the First Committee I should like to express congratulations and best wishes to the people and Republic of Yemen on its unification.

I should also like to take this opportunity to welcome the delegation of a newly united Germany to the First Committee and to extend to its people and Government the best wishes and congratulations of the First Committee and myself. I welcome the stated affirmation of Germany's commitment to the work of the United Nations and the challenges of our time.

The General Assembly has done my country and myself a great honour by electing me as Chairman of this body. I thank all delegations most warmly for the confidence they have placed in me. It will be my endeavour to conduct the business of this Committee in a manner which will justify the trust and confidence that you have so generously accorded me.

(The Chairman)

In this connection, let me also say how much I appreciate the very kind words extended to me by Ambassador Andrés Aguilar, Permanent Representative of Venezuela to the United Nations, when he nominated me at the first meeting of the Committee. I request him to kindly convey, on behalf of the Committee and on my own behalf, our gratitude to Mr. Adolfo Taylhardat for the exemplary manner in which he presided over our deliberations at the forty-fourth session.

I am fully aware that I am following in the footsteps of very distinguished Chairmen who have presided ably and skilfully over the work of this body in the past several years. For my part, I shall spare neither time nor effort in bringing the work of the Committee to a successful conclusion. In doing so, I count on the co-operation and assistance of the entire membership of the Committee, as well as on the most valuable experience and competence of the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Yasushi Akashi, the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Security Council Affairs, Mr. Vasiliy Safronchuk, and the Secretary of the First Committee, Mr. Sohrab Rheradi. and his colleagues in the Secretariat, who will contribute to the success of our work. I am certain that the First Committee will benefit fully from their experience, and we look forward to their support in dealing with many important issues before us.

ELECTION OF THE VICE-CHAIRMEN AND THE RAPPORTEUR

The CHAIRMAN: Proceeding to the first item on our agenda, that is, the election of the Committee's Vice-Chairmen and Rapporteur, I should like to draw the Committee's attention to the decision taken by the General Assembly at its 1935th meeting, on 22 September 1971, concerning the procedure for the election of officers of the Main Committees. According to the terms of that decision, the nomination of candidates should be limited to one statement for each candidate, after which the Committee should immediately proceed to the election. The Committee will, therefore, follow that procedure today.

Mr. FAHMY (Egypt): First of all, I would like to express to you, on behalf of my delegation and on my own behalf, our warmest congratulations on your election as Chairman of this important Committee of the General Assembly. We are confident that your long experience of international affairs, your expertise in multilateral diplomacy and your knowledge of the area of interest to this Committee will serve us well, and ensure that our joint endeavours will be crowned with success.

Last year, I had the honour and pleasure of being Vice-Chairman of this Committee. It was a stimulating learning experience. I would like once again to thank all the representatives here for their co-operation throughout those proceedings, and, in particular, the other members of the Bureau of this Committee during the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly: the Chairman, Ambassador Taylhardat of Venezuela; the other Vice-Chairman, Mr. Hassan Mashadi of the Islamic Republic of Iran; and Mr. Dimitris Platis of Greece, who was our Rapporteur. Last but not least, I would like to convey my sincere gratitude to all the members of the Secretariat for their invaluable assistance.

Today, as an extension of my responsibilities as one of the Vice-Chairmen last year, I have the privilege of submitting to the Committee the candidature of Mr. Ronald S. Morris of Australia for one of the posts of Vice-Chairman of the First Committee of the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly. Mr. Morris joined the Australian diplomatic service in 1971. He has represented his country on a number of diplomatic assignments, including assignments in Iran in 1972 to 1974: Pakistan in 1962 to 1984; Ireland in 1982 to 1985; and Fiji in 1988. He has served at the United Nations in New York before, from 1976 to 1962, and distinguished himself here by serving as Rapporteur of the Fourth Committee in 1979, and by being appointed that same year by the Secretary-General as a Special Representative to observe the election in the New Hebrides.

(Mr. Fahmy, Egypt)

Mr. Morris is particularly well qualified in the field of disarmament, having served on the Bureau for Disarmament Affairs at the Australian Foreign Ministry, and on the Australiau delegation to the Conference on Disarmament, where he has been Deputy Head of the delegation since 1988. He is currently Acting Head of the Australiau delegation to the Conference on Disarmament.

Having said all #is, I would add that Mr. Morris does not in fact need any introduction here in the First Committee: he is well known among us, having participated in numerous sessions of the First Committee, where he has been an effective interlocutor, constructively endeavouring to reach agreement between representatives. As a personal friend, I find particular pleasure in nominating him for the post of Vice-Chairman of this Committee.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank the representative of Egypt for the nomination of Mr. Ronald S. Morris of Australia for the post of Vice-Chairman of this Committee. I greatly appreciate the kind words he has addressed to me. I wish to convey the Committee's appreciation to Mr. Fahmy for his valuable contribution to the work of the Committee in his capacity as Vice-Chairman during last year's session.

There being no other nomination, I shall take it that, in accordance with rule 103 of the rules of procedure and in keeping with established practice, the Committee wishes to dispense with the vote by secret ballot and to declare Mr. Ronald S. Morris elected Vice-Chairman of the First Committee by acclamation.

Mr. Ronald S. Morris (Australia) was elected Vice-Chairman of the First Committee by acclamation.

Mr. NAIMI-ARFA (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the very outset I would like to take this opportunity to convey to you, Sir, on behalf of the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran, our warmest congratulations on your unanimous election as Chairman of the First Committee. Indeed, your election to this high post is a distinct recognition of the reputation you have gained during your sojourn at the United Nations as a widely respected diplomat with vast experience and knowledge in international affairs and specifically in the field of disarmament. It is with a great sense of satisfaction that we see you at the helm of affairs in the First Committee at a time when rapid and profound developments are taking place throughout the world. We are confident that, under your leadership and judicious guidance, the First Committee will achieve important and concrete results. I wish to assure you of my delegation's full support 6s you undertake your responsibilities as our Chairman.

At this stage, I would also like to express my delegation's sincere appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Adolfo Taylhardat, Deputy Foreign Minister of Venezuela, for the patience, perseverance and exemplary manner in which he conducted the proceedings of this Committee at the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

My appreciation goes also to my colleague, Nabil Fahmy, of Egypt, Vice-Chairman of the First Committee at its previous session, and also to the Rapporteur of the Committee.

On behalf of Mr. Hassan Mashhadi, who was Vice-Chairman of the Committee at its previous session, I have the honour and privilege today of nominating Mr. Sergei Nikolaevich Martynov, the representative of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, for the post of Vice-Chairman of the Committee. Mr. Martynov graduated in 1975 from the Moscow State Institute of International Relations and

(Mr. Naimi-Arfa, Islamic Republic of Iran)

entered the diplomatic service of the Byelorussian SSR the same year. Mr, Sergei N. Martynov has been deeply involved with matters relating to disarmament and international security since 1975. From the wide range of his diplomatic experience, I would like to cite the position he sssumed as Rapporteur and, subsequently, as Vice-Chairman of the Disarmament Commission during 1986 and 1987 respectively, Furthermore, for three consecutive years, between 1988 and 1990, he was also elected Chairman of the Contact Group regarding nuclear disarmament within the Disarmament Commission. Mr. Martynov is currently Deputy Read of the Department of International Organizations at the Ministry of Foreign Affair6 of the Byelorussian SSR dealing with disarmament matters and issues of international security. Mr. Martynov has also held important posts at various sessions of several multilateral bodies that have dealt with disarmament problems.

I am aware of the fact that many representatives who are present today have had the opportunity to witness Mr. Martynov's capabilities in dealing with difficult issues concerning disarmament matters in a most efficient and effective manner. In recognition of the fact that his many qualifications, only some of which I have highlighted here, eminently qualify him for the post of Vice-Chairman of the First Committee, I have the great pleasure of nominating Mr. Sergei N. Martynov for election to the post of Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the nomination of Mr. Martynov of the Byelorussian SSR for the post of Vice-Chairman of the Committee. I thank him also for his kind remarks addressed to me. I wish to convey to him, through Mr. Hassan Mashhadi, the Committee's appreciation of his valuable contribution to the work of the Committee in his capacity as Vice-Chairman during last year's session.

(The Chairman)

There being no other nomination, I shall take it that, in accordance with rule 103 of the rules of procedure and in keeping with established practice, the Committee wishes to dispense with the vote by secret ballot and to declare Mr. Sergei Martynov elected Vice-Chairman of the First Committee by acclamation.

Mr. Seraei Nikolaevich Martynov (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) was elected Vice-Chairman of the First Committee by acclamation.

The CHAIRMAN: May I express to the two Vice-Chairmen my warmest congratulations on the distinction that has been conferred upon them and convey my assurance that we will co-operate in a harmonious manner so that we can jointly discharge the responsibilities incumbent upon us.

Mr. PLATIS (Greece) (interpretation from French): Allow me first of all to congratulate you, Sir, both personally and on behalf of my Government, on your unanimous election as Chairman of the First Committee. Your years of experience as well as your personal qualities are a guarantee of the good conduct of the work of our Committee. Those same qualities also guarantee that you will be able to carry out your task witb the same success as did your predecessor, Ambassador Taylhardat.

Allow me also to take this opportunity to extend my thanks to the two Vice-Chairmen of the First Committee during the forty-fourth session, Mr. Hassan Mashhadi of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Mr. Nabil Fahmy of the Arab Republic of Egypt, for their outstanding work during the previous session.

I should also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the two Vice-Chairmen of our Committee who have been unanimously elected, Mr. Ronald Morris of Australia and Mr. Sergei Martynov of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic.

As Rapporteur of the First Committee during the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly, I have the honour to submit the candidacy of Mr. Latevi Modem Lawson-Betum of the delegation of Togo for the post of Rapporteur of our Committee during its forty-fifth session.

(Mr. Platis, Greece)

Before submitting to the Committee his curriculum vitae, I should like to describe briefly Mr. Lawson-Betum's personal qualities. Indeed, on many occasions I have had an opportunity to appreciate his qualities, and in particular during the work of the previous session. Xn fact; he takes up his tasks with scrupulous attention. His judgement is always sound and prudent and based on in-depth knowledge as well as on common sense, qualities that are indispensable to a diplomat. I am sure that this personal opinion of mine on Mr. Lawson-Betum's outstanding qualities will soon be shared by representatives in the First Committee.

Mr. Lawson-Betum was born in Lome, Togo, in 1950. After having completed his primary and secondary studies at Lome and at Gueret, France, he continued his university studies at the Institute of Political Studies in Grenoble. Then he went to Cameroon, where he received his degree from the Institute of International Relations.

Mr. Lawson-Betum joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Co-operation of Togo in 1975. Two years later he went to Moscow, where he was First Secretary at the Embassy of Togo until 1980. His professional experience then continued in Lome, where from 1980 until 1986 he was Assistant Director in his Ministry's Department of International Organizations. Since 1986 he has been serving as Second Counsellor and then as First Counsellor in the Permanent Mission of Togo to the United Nations.

His experience at meetings and international conferences is also impressive. He was a member of the delegation of Togo at the twenty-second and thirtieth sessions of the Council of Ministers and at the twenty-first Summit Conference of the Organisation of African Unity. He was also a member of his country's delegation at the meetings of the Co-ordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Countries

(Mr. Platis, Greece)

at Luanda, Angola, and at New Delhi, India, and at the Special Meeting of the Co-ordinating Bureau for preparation of the third special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, at Havana, Cuba, in May 1988.

Mr. Lawson-Betum is married and has four children. He speaks French, English and Russian.

In the light of the professional qualities of Mr. Lawson-Betum, which I have just outlined, I have the honour of requesting all delegations present here to accept unanimously the candidacy of our colleague from Togo and to give him their full confidence in his task.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank the representative of Greece for his nomination of Mr. Latevi Modem Lawson-Betum of Togo to the post of Rapporteur of the First Committee. I would also like to thank him for the kind words he addressed to me. I am certain that I am expressing the sentiments of the Committee when I offer our thanks to the representative of Greece for the task he so ably performed as Rapporteur at the forty-fourth session.

Members of the Committee have just heard the representative of Greece nominate Mr. Lawson-Betum to the post of Rapporteur. As there is no other nomination, I take it that in accordance with rule 103 of the rules of procedure and in keeping with established practice, the Committee wishes as before to dispense with the vote by secret ballot and to declare Mr. Lawson-Betum elected Rapporteur of the First Committee by acclamation.

Mr, Lawson-Betum (Togo) was elected Rapporteur of the First Committee by acclamation.

The CHAIRMAN: I wish to express my most sincere and cordial congratulations to Mr. Lawson-Betum on his election as Rapporteur of the First Committee. I invite him now to take the place reserved for him on the podium.

Before I call on the next speaker, I wish to draw the attention of members of the Committee to rule 110 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, which reads as follows:

> "Congratulations to the officers of a Main Committee shall not be expressed except by the Chairman of the previous session - or, in his absence, by a member of his delegation - after all the officers of the Committee have been elected."

I would like to request that this rule be respected.

(The Chairman)

I now call on the representative of Venezuela, who will speak on behalf of Ambassador Taylhardat, Deputy Foreign Minister of Venezuela and Chairman of the First Committee at the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

Mr. AGUILAR (Venezuela) (interpretation from Spanish): It was an honour and pleasure for me as Permanent Representative of Venezuela to the United Nations, to nominate you as Chairman of this Committee at the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly. I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on behalf of my delegation and on my own behalf and also on behalf of Ambassador Taylhardat on your assumption of this important post.

As I said at the 1st meeting of this Committee, Ambassador Rana needs no introduction. Everyone is aware of his diplomatic talents and we followed closely his outstanding contribution as Permanent Representative of Nepal. I wish to emphasize in particular his important work in the Security Council and elsewhere in the United Nations, for example as Chairman of the Working Group on the nuclear capability of South Africa during the 1990 session of the Disarmament Commission. At that time we finally adopted by consensus the conclusions and recommendations that had been under consideration for a long time. Consequently, we cannot but express our satisfaction at the election of Ambassador Rana. We are convinced that, given his skill, his long experience and his sound academic training, the Committee will enjoy skilful leadership, which will make it possible for us to conclude our work successfully at this session. The delegation of Venezuela, for its part, is prepared to extend any assistance or co-operation that may be needed to enable him to fully carry out his duties.

I take this opportunity also to congratulate, on behalf of my delegation and on my own behalf, Ambassador Morris of Australia and Ambassador Martynov of the Eyelorussiaa Soviet Socialist Republic on their election as Vice-Chairmen of this Committee. We should like also to congratulate Mr. Lawson-Return of Togo, who will

(Mr. Aguilar, Venezuela)

serve as Rapporteur of the Committee. In view of the statements we heard introducing the two Vice-Chairmen and the Rapporteur, as well as our familiarity with their work, we can, I believe, say that we expect them to have every success in the performance of their duties at this session.

On behalf of Ambassador Taylhardat we would also like to thank all the members of the Committee for. their active participation in the deliberations of the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session. As is well known, without the participation and active contribution of the members of the Committee, it is very hard for the Chairman of the Committee to perform his functions successfully, so on behalf of Ambassador Taylhardat we thank you for the co-operation you extended to him. We are sure that he too would have liked, on this occasion, to express his appreciation of the support he received from the Secretariat officials, especially from the Secretary of the Committee.

On this occasion I do not intend to give a detailed assessment of the work of the First Committee at the last session. That is usually done by the outgoing Chairman. I will confine myself to a few general comments in connection with the disarmament items which are before the Committee.

This year the work of the First Committee will be taking place in unprecedented circumstances, because of the profound and rapid changes that have taken place in the international community. In spite of the differences, tensions and conflicts that still exist in certain regions of the world, which have a direct impact on international peace and security, it must be recognized that the present international climate offers us encouraging prospects.

(Mr. Aguilar, Venezu.)

There is no doubt that these changes which we can see in the world are providing the international community with new challenges, and we must examine these opportunites with great care, because the work of the international community must reflect the interests of all States, large, medium and small.

Frequent contacts among the leaders of the super-Powers and the coming together of the East and the West, with the consequent changes in Europe, have replaced the confrontation and distrust which characterized the world for more than 40 years. Proof of this is the ending of the cold war and the recent significant peaceful reunification of Germany. My delegation would like to take this opportunity once again to extend a welcome to it in this Committee. However, we are convinced that it is necessary to open a new chapter of history in which co-operation, harmony and peace replace belligerent confrontations between various economic and social systems and the selfish satisfaction of self-interest.

Disarmament continues to be one of the basic yearnings of mankind. In this new world environment specific steps have also been taken for the limitation of arms as we move towards disarmament. The agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union has led to certain tangible results in this area. During the past year they reached agreement on the framework for talks on the reduction of strategic weapons. We hope that technical problems will not undermine the present negotiations. Agreements on chemical weapons have been signed, but we are greatly concerned by delays in concluding a convention banning chemical weapons and providing for the destruction of arsenals of such weapons.

With regard to other disarmament questions, we should point to the progress made in the reduction of military forces in Europe, particularly the prospects for the forthcoming meeting of 35 countries participating in work on confidence-building measures in Europe, which will be taking place in Paris on the nineteenth of this month. In spite of the progress that has been made bilaterally,

(Mr. Aguilar, Venezuela)

we regret that at the fourth Review Conference of Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, held recently, it was impossible to reach a consensus on the cessation of nuclear-weapon testing. Consequently, the highest priority must continue to be given to the concluding of a broad treaty banning nuclear weapons as the only way in which to prevent the further development of new types of such weapons.

Although modest progress has been made in the realm of disarmament, this is not an irreversible trend. Many obstacles remain to be removed. We might mention the persistence of the nuclear Powers in maintaining a certain nuclear capacity as a means of implementing their controversial treaty of deterrence and certain military treaties in certain conflicting areas for the purpose of promoting more sophisticated and destructive conventional weapons.

During this session of the General Assembly the First Committee will once again be dealing with all these complex matters relating to disarmament and international security. We must do whatever we can to carry out our work constructively so as to bring about general and complete disarmament under effective international control.

The CHAIRMAN: On behalf of the Vice-Chairmen and the Rapporteur of the Committee as well as on my own behalf, I thank Ambassador Aguilar of Venezuela for his kind words addressed to me and to other officers of the Committee. I shall indeed depend on his valuable co-operation and advice in the discharge of my responsibilities.

I now call on the representative of Australia, Mr. Ronald Morris, Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

Mr. MORRIS (Australia): After the generous remarks by Mr. Fahmy and bearing in mind the relevant rules of procedure concerning the election of office-holders, my statement perhaps could best be characterized as one in exercise of the right of reply, but I offer the following comments at two levels, official and personal.

Before doing so, I should like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. Please be assured that my delegation will do everything possible to assist you in your task in the weeks ahead. I would also take this opportunity to congratulate the other officers of the Committee who have been elected today.

Turning to my own appointment, first and foremost I see this as an honour for my country, Australia. I welcome and am grateful for the confidence and trust that delegations have placed, through my election, in Australia. Secondly, at the personal level, it is a particular pleasure to have been nominated by an old friend and colleague, Mr. Fahmy of Egypt. As you have noted, Mr. Fahmy served with distinction as one of the Vice-Chairmen of the First Committee last year, and it will be a challenge this year for me to follow in his footsteps. Please be assured that I shall do my best.

The CHAIRMAN: I now call on the representative of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Mr. Sergei Martynov, Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

Mr. MARTYNOV (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) (interpretation from Russian): Sir, first of all I should like, on behalf of the delegation of the Byelorussian SSR, to congratulate you sincerely on your election to the important post of Chairman of our Committee and to express our confidence that the Committee will deal successfully with the very complex tasks facing it.

I should like also sincerely to congratulate Mr. Morris of Australia on his election to the post of Vice-Chairman of the Committee and Mr. Lawson-Return of Togo

(Mr. Martynov, Byelorussian SSR)

on his election to the post of Rapporteur. I should like also to thank the representative of Iran for having proposed the candidacy of Mr. Martynov for the post of Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

The delegation of the Byelorussian SSR is ready to co-operate closely with you, Mr. Chairman, with all the officers of the Committee and with all the members of the Committee, in a constructive spirit to arrive at decisions which will serve to resolve the disarmament issues.

Mr. LAWSON-BETUM (Togo) (interpretation from French): First of all, I am dolighted to express my gratitude to the members of the First Committee for electing ma Rapporteur on the proposal of my predecessor, Mr. Dimitrios Platis. This is an honour not only to me but to my country, Togo, whose profound dedication to peace, disarmament and international security is well known.

I should like to take this opportunity to congratulate you warmly, Sir, on your unanimous election to guide the work of the First Committee. In view of your rich diplomatic experience and talents and the extraordinary commitment of your country, Nepal, to disarmament, the First Committee was indeed inspired to choose you.

Allow me also to congratulate the two Vice-Chairmen who have just been elected, Mr. Morris of Australia and Mr. Martynov of the Byelorussian SSR. Along with them, I shall try to make my full contribution to the successful carrying out of the work of our Committee, which should be commensurate with the need to take advantage of the present situation in international relations and the positive advances which have taken place in the field of disarmament and to seek ways in which to counter setbacks. As Rapporteur I believe I can count on the valuable assistance of the members of the Secretariat.

(Mr. Lawson-Betum, Togo)

Finally, it is my duty warmly to thank my predecessor and friend, Mr. Dimitrios Platis, Rapporteur of the First Committee at the forty-fourth session, for his kind and generous words and to commend the very useful and outstanding work that he carried out last year with such conviction and self-denial.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank the Rapporteur for his kind remarks and his expression of co-operation extended to me and to the Vice-Chairman of the Committee, I am sure #at I express not only my own feelings but also those of the Vice-Chairman when I say that we are looking forward to working closely with him during the current session.

Having elected its officers, the Committee has concluded its consideration of the first item on its agenda.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK (A/C.1/45/1, A/C.1/45/2)

The CHAIRMAN: At the outset, I should like to draw the attention of members to document A/C.1/45/1, which contains the letter dated 21 September 1990 from the President of the General Assembly addressed to me, informing me of the items that the General Assembly at its third plenary meeting decided to allocate to the First Committee, namely, agenda items 45 to 70 and the relevant part of agenda item 12.

With respect to the proposed programme of work and timetable as contained in document A/C.1/45/1, I wish to remind members that the programme of work was developed following the extensive informal consultations that were held in Geneva in August and more recently in New York. I should point out that I have also taken into account the relevant recommendations of the General Assembly as well as the views expressed on the subject in the consultations, The proposed programme of work and timetable were recommended for adoption on an ad referendum basis by the members of the First Committee at their meeting last Wednesday, 3 October. I hope that the Committee will be in a position to approve it today.

(The Chairman)

Members may recall that, according to established practice, the First Committee commences its substantive work only after the conclusion of the general debate in the plenary Assembly. The rationale behind this tradition is well known and I therefore need not go into it.

As concerns the concluding date for First Committee deliberations and negotiations, members will recall that the Main Committees of the General Assembly have in recent years endeavoured to complete consideration of their respective agenda items as expeditiously as possible. Keeping this in mind, the First Committee should strive to conclude its work this year by 29 November, despite the large number of items inscribed on its agenda - some 27 in all.

These limitations leave the First Committee with a period extending from Monday, 15 October, to Thursday, 29 November 1990, giving the Committee a total of 33 working days in which it could hold a maximum of 66 meetings, provided the requisite conference services are available.

The number of meetings proposed for the various stages of our work is based on the assumption that the Committee should be able to complete its work during a total of 66 meetings. I have arrived at this number on the basis of previous experience with respect to the work of the Committee. Last year, some 66 meetings were allocated to the Committee and 51 were actually utilized. Accordingly, it is my estimate that with a due degree of diligence and effort. the Committee should indeed be able to complete its work in the allotted time.

The proposed programme of work and timetable which is before members of the Committee has, as I stated earlier, been prepared on the basis of past practice and precedents that have evolved over many years and served the Committee well. Accordingly, members will observe that the 27 items on the agenda before the First Committee have been clustered, in the traditional manner, into three categories:

(The Chairman)

those items related to disarmament issues, namely, items 45 to 66; the item relating to the question of Antarctica, item 67; and the items related to international security, namely, items 68, 69 and 70. In addition, members will observe that item 12, in its relevant part, has been subsumed within the same time-frame set aside for the last cluster, but as a separate item. I shall have more to say about item 12 at a later stage.

In accordance with the programme of work and timetable, the Committee would first take up agenda items relating to disarmament issues. With respect to those items, as indicated in the programme of work, the Committee would conduct a general debete on all disarmament agenda items utilizing a total of 24 meetings from Monday, 15 October, to Tuesday, 30 October, during which delegations may also speak on any specific issues under the disarmament items if they wish to do so. Subsequently, the Committee would move on to the consideration of and action on draft resolutions on disarmament items from Wednesday, 31 October, to Friday, 16 November, devoting a total of 26 meetings to that purpose.

I should like to add that, based on past practice, the number of meetings devoted to consideration of and action on draft resolutions has been increased from 24 to 26 in order to provide sufficient opportunity for delegations to consider the draft resolutions as well as to undertake the necessary consultations with a view to merging draft resolutions where possible.

Here it may be pertinent to indicate that, wherever possible, I have set the deadline as early as feasible in order to allow sufficient time for delegations to undertake the necessary consultations before the Committee proceeds to take action upon the draft resolutions concerned.

The deadline for submission of draft resolutions on disarmament agenda items will be Tuesday, 30 October 1990, at 6 p.m., and it is my intention to request the co-operation of members in adhering strictly to that deadline. Delegations are

(The Chairman)

strongly encouraged to Submit and introduce draft resolutions as early as possible, even during the period of the general debate if that suits them, so that all delegations can address the draft texts as early as possible.

Furthermore, I should like to underscore the fact that it is imperative that delegations submit any draft resolutions that might entail programme budget implications at the earliest possible date in order to enable the Committee to take action upon them with a view to meeting the mandatory deadline required for their submission to the Fifth Committee.

In that regard, I should like to urge delegations to speak as early in the debate as they can, and not to cause the speakers' list in the last days of the debate to become so crowded that we must be here for unduly long hours,

I should note also that the voting procedure established previously of grouping draft resolutions into logical clusters will be maintained and I shall present specific proposals concerning this in due course.

(The Chairman)

After concluding consideraton of agenda items related to disarmament, the Committee will move on to agenda item 67, which deals with the question of Antarctica. Here the Committee would devote 19 to 21 November to a general debate, consideration of and action on draft resolutions under that agenda item, for which a total of six meetings is provided. The time allocated for the consideration of that item would be equal to that allocated at our previous session. The deadline for the submission of draft resolutions under agenda item 67 would be Monday, 19 November, at noon.

Lastly, the First Committee will turn its attention to agenda items 68, 69 and 70, dealing with international security, from Friday, 23 to Thursday, 29 November 1990. That provides a total of 10 meetings available for the general debate and for consideration of, and action on, draft resolutions to be submitted under those agenda items. I believe that, on the basis of our past experience, the Committee can assume that the time allocated for consideration of those three items should provide suitable opportunities for delegations to hold the necessary consultations. The deadline for submission of draft resolutions on international security agenda items will be Tuesday, 27 November? at 6 p.m.

As I indicated earlier, the relevant part of item 12 of the General Assembly agenda - chapter III, section D, of the report of the Economic and Social Council (A/45/3), entitled "International co-operation in the elimination of the consequences of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear-power plant" - has been placed within the same time slot as is to be devoted to the general debate and consideration of, and action on, draft resolutions on international security agenda items, but of course as a separate item. At this juncture, I would like to point out that the international community is acutely aware that the tragic consequences of the accident - the effects of which have had a special impact on the health of children - have had international ramifications. Indeed, the concerted efforts of

(The Chairman)

the international community will be needed in order to overcome the consequences of the Chernobyl nuclear accident. As I informed the Committee at our open-ended informal consultations on 3 October, I have consulted with all delegations concerned regarding the appropriate manner in which that matter is to be considered in the Committee.

I also wish to reiterate in that connection that the same item is also on the agenda of the Second Committee, where the expectation is that it will receive a comprehensive and detailed consideration. In that context, I should also like to inform the First Committee that I have met with the Chairman of the Second Committee, Mr. George Papadatos of Greece, and apprised him of the situation concerning agenda item 12. On the basis of my consultations, it is my understanding that as far as the First Committee is concerned, at this stage delegations are of the opinion that it may not be necessary for the First Committee to address that agenda item. It is my belief that the Committee is in a position to agree with this procedure, and I see that that is indeed the case.

On the basis of the programme of work and timetable now before the Committee, the Committee is, I believe, in a position to dispose of all the agenda items allocated to it by the General Assembly by 29 November 1990. I should like to emphasize that the programme of work and timetable are based on the assumption that the due degree of flexibility would be retained in our use of the time and resources made available to the Committee, However, I think that the programme of work, which is based on broad and extensive consultations and past practice, will meet the Committee's need and allow it to fulfil its task within the time available,

If there is no objection, I shall take it that the Committee agrees with the suggested programme of work and timetable,

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: The programme of work just adopted by the Committee assumes that our deliberations will demand full utilization of the time available. In that connection, I should again like to call upon members of the Committee kindly to submit draft resolutions pertaining to the different agenda items as far in advance as feasible, so as to provide sufficient time for necessary consultations. In order to avoid any possible misunderstanding, the Secretariat has asked me to request members of the Committee to submit in writing all draft resolutions, amendments, sponsorships, and requests for accommodation for group meetings.

I should now like to draw the Committee's attention to General Assembly decision 341401, particularly to its provisions dealing with explanations of vote, rights of reply, budgetary and financial questions and the work of the Main Committees, which I intend to apply with the co-operation of all members..

In order to utilize to the full the time available to the Committee, and in order to avoid loss of time arising from meetings starting late or ending early, I should like, with the co-operation of the members, to start the meetings of the First Committee punctually. That will enable us to avoid unnecessary delays in meeting the target date for the conclusion of the Committee's work for the current session. Therefore, I shall endeavour to open the meetings of the Committee at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. sharp.

Meetings of the Committee will be convened only when there is a sufficient number of speakers. I feel that, as a general rule, we should have no fewer than four speakers inscribed for a particular meeting, so that we may be able to use the time and conference resources available to us in the most efficient manner possible. Resources allocated to a meeting cancelled at an appropriate time may be released for other meetings held within or outside the framework of the First Committee.

(The Chairman)

In order to give ample time and to avoid a rush, the list of speakers is already open so that members of the Committee may inscribe their names to address the Committee. I should like to inform members that the list of speakers for the general debate on disarmament agenda items will be closed on Monday, 15 October, at 6 p.m. I therefore urge delegations kindly to inscribe their names on the list of speakers before the.Committee begins its substantive work.

At this juncture, I call on the Secretary to explain in greater detail certain matters pertaining to the proceedings of the First Committee.

Mr. KHERADI (Secretary of the Committee): As requested, I should like to draw the Committee's attention to the following additional points.

I should like first to invite the attention of delegations to the fact that this year once again, in order to avoid the late starting of meetings and as a cost-saving measure, the General Assembly has decided to waive, during its forty-fifth session, the requirement that one quarter of the members must be present before a meeting of a Main Committee may be declared open and debate permitted to proceed. The General Assembly made that recommendation on the understanding that such a departure from the rules did not involve any permanent change in the relevant provisions of rules 67 and 108 of the rules of procedure, pertaining to the opening of meetings.

In accordance with the Committee's programme of work and timetable as contained in document A/C.1/45/2, which has just been adopted by the Committee, the list of speakers for the general debate on all disarmament agenda items will be closed on Monday, 15 October 1990, at 6 p.m. A number of delegations have already indicated their intention to participate in the general debate on those items, and the Secretariat has taken note of those requests. In order to enable the Committee to utilize available services fully, all delegations are requested to inscribe their names on the list of speakers at their earliest convenience, if possible even today.

As you, Mr. Chairman, noted in your statement, members of the Committee are requested to submit draft resolutions, especially those draft resolutions which entail programme budget implications, as far in advance au possible in order to allow sufficient time for the preparation by the Secretariat of the estimate of expenditure and for its consideration by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee, as well as to provide enough time

(Mr. Kheradi)

for consultations. That would certainly facilitate the Secretariat's task of processing the draft resolutions in a timely manner.

I request members of the Committee to note that draft resolutions and amendments, and the names of sponsors thereof, should be submitted to the Secretariat in writing to ensure accuracy and avoid any possible misunderstanding. Requests for use of conference rooms for group meetings should also be submitted in writing as early as possible so that the necessary arrangements may be made in time.

Delegations are requested to provide the Conference Officers with a minimum of 30 copies of all prepared statements for conference servicing purposes. These, I would point out, are in addition to the copies required for any necessary general distribution among delegations.

I should like to draw the attention of all members of the Committee to document A/C.1/45/INF.1, which will be issued within a few days. It will list, for the purpose of information and ready reference, all documents before the First Committee issued as of 12 October 1990. That list will be updated as appropriate.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I should like to give you, the other Committee officers and all delegations the firmest assurances of the support and co-operation of the secretariat of the First Committee and, of course, of the Departments of Disarmament Affairs and of Political and Security Council Affairs.

The CHAIRMAN: As far as the question of the rationalization of the work of the First Committee is concerned, in analytical terms one could point out that there are two major dimensions to the issue.

First, there are matters concerning structural, organizational and logistic aspects that can be applied in an effective and efficient manner conducive to the better utilisation of the Committee's available resources in terms of conference facilities. As far as this aspect is concerned, I am sure we are all in agreement

(The Chairman)

that despite the fact that the First Committee deals with the largest number of agenda items of any Main Committee and in spite of the fact that the Conunittee begins its substantive work only after the conclusion of the general debate in the plenary meetings of the Assembly, the Committee has over the years always succeeded in concluding its work within the allotted time-frame and in the moat effective and efficient manner possible, due in great measure to the efforts expended by the Secretariat.

The second aspect of the question of rationalisation concerns what I would characterize as more substantive considerations, and pertains to the number of draft resolutions adopted and the number of agenda items on the list. With respect to this second issue, worthwhile efforts have been made in the past several years and tangible results have been achieved. Furthermore, in view of the growing importance that this issue has assumed, it is perhaps now incumbent upon us to pursue this matter even more vigorously and in a more concerted fashion than before.

As members are all aware, the question of further rationalisation of the work of the First Committee has been in the forefront of our consideration during the past several years. Successive Chairmen at various sessions of the General Assembly have made commendable efforts to enhance the effectiveness and rationalization of the Committee's work. In that context, members will recall that the practice of grouping draft resolutions into different clusters at the stage of takingaction on them has proved extremely efficiacious. Accordingly, it will be my intention to continue that useful practice. But from a substantive point of view an even more important aspect of rationalisation is the question of finding broader areas of agreement as far as the draft resolutions the Committee adopts are concerned. The issue, as we are all aware, while of great importance, is, of course, also a sensitive one. Nevertheless, we will need to strive in our

(The Chairman)

deliberations to do our utmost to make a joint effort to bridge the gaps among divergent viewpoints wherever possible. It is my belief that by doing so we will in the final analysis be contributing to our common benefit. Accordingly, it will be my intention to convene at an early stage of our proceedings an open-ended group of Friends of the Chairman to explore the further ramifications of this issue.

I should like also to mention that at the request of the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons, Ambassador Hyltenius of Sweden, an informal meeting will be set aside again this year to enable the Chairman of the Ad Eoc Committee to inform delegations in the First Committee about the situation prevailing in negotiations on a chemical weapons convention at the Conference on Disarmament and to provide an opportunity for all States not participating in those negotiations to express their views.

(The Chairman)

Finally, I would also like to take this opportunity to remind you that Disarmament Week and the Eighth Pledging Conference for the World Disarmament Campaign will take place on 25 October 1990 at 10.30 a.m. The observance of Disarmament Week will be marked by statements from the Chairman of the First Committee, the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General of the United Nations. This will be followed immediately by the Pledging Conference.

Mr. SOTIROV (Bulgaria): As rule 110 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly does not allow my delegation to congratulate you, Sir, as was dons so eloquently by some other delegations, we will reserve this for our statement in the general debate.

I would like to make two very brief points regarding the organisation of our work. The first is related to your election and that of the other members of the Bureau. I would like to raise the question whether, since we identified the Vice-Chairmen of the Committee - the representatives of Australia and the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic - it would not be fair to identify the country of the Chairman and the Rapporteur also. If I were told that this was the practice in all of the Main Committees of the General Assembly, I would reply that there is a chairman even in model United Nations plays put on by colleges across the river in Queens; but here I would like to see the name of your country, Nepal, added to your function as Chairman of the First Committee of the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session. This also applies to the Rapporteur.

My second point is addressed to the Secretariat. We hear a lot about saving resources in the Committee, in particular about the utilization of those resources. I would suggest that the First Committee come up with a proposal for a significant reduction in the air-conditioning in the rooms of the Main Connnittees.

(Mr. Sotirov, Bulaaria)

We do not need these freezing temperatures. I do not think it is a contribution to the efforts in the field of disarmament, and if we could save some money in this energy crisis, which is especially felt in Eastern Europe, I think it would be good. In Eastern Europe we do not have enough heat. We do not have enough cold. Here we have excessive amounts of both.

The CHAIRMAN: The suggestions made by the representative of Bulgaria will be looked into.

Mr. HASSAN (United Arab Emirates) (interpretation from Arabic): On behalf of our delegation I would like to thank you and the members of the First Committee for their condolences to the Government and people of the United Arab Emirates on the death of the Vice-President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al-Maktoum.

The CHAIRMAN: If no delegation wishes to make any further comments or remarks at this stage, I propose to adjourn the meeting now and the Committee will begin its substantive work, as decided, on Monday, 15 October 1990, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.