



General Assembly

Fifty-seventh session

First Committee

23rd meeting

Tuesday, 29 October 2002, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

Chairman: Mr. Kiwanuka (Uganda)

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

Agenda items 57, 58 and 60 to 73 (*continued*)

Action on all draft resolutions submitted under all disarmament and international security agenda items

The Chairman: I would like to ask the indulgence of the Committee so that we may adjourn for thirty minutes for further consultations.

The meeting was suspended at 10.10 a.m. and reconvened at 10.45 a.m.

The Chairman: I have striven to present the Committee with the Chair's draft resolution based on widespread consensus. Yesterday afternoon, two delegations came up with amendments and have been consulting on those amendments, which have been circulated in A/C.1/57/L.60. It became obvious that those amendments would be unacceptable to a large cross section of this Committee.

In spite of my sincere efforts, it does not seem that there is going to be a consensus. I therefore inform the Committee that I am withdrawing the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/57/L.26/Rev.3, "Disarmament, non-proliferation and international peace and security". The Chair is withdrawing its draft resolution because there is no consensus.

As I stated during previous meetings, and in accordance with the Committee's programme of work and timetable, the First Committee will now embark on

the fourth phase of its work, general debate, consideration of and action on draft resolutions submitted under agenda item 59, "Question of Antarctica", on Wednesday, 30 October.

I call again on those delegation wishing to participate in the general debate to inscribe their names on the list of speakers as soon as possible in order to enable the Committee to efficiently use the conference facilities available to it. I remind the Committee that the deadline for draft resolutions under agenda item 59 is tomorrow at 12 noon. Those delegation wishing to submit draft resolutions under this agenda item should do so as soon as possible, with the diskette, in order to enable the Secretariat to issue them as official documents of the Committee.

It is of my understanding that the delegation of Cuba has requested the floor.

Mr. Benítez Versón (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The draft resolution entitled "Disarmament, non-proliferation and international peace and security", A/C.1/57/L.26/Rev.3, has encountered a very bumpy and at times indistinct road from the moment when many delegations learned — for the first time, when it had already been officially issued — that the Chair intended to present a draft resolution. Some here feel that this exercise could have followed a less torturous path if there had been an open and transparent process of consultations from the outset.

In any case, the fact is that, although we were presented with four versions of the draft resolution

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

contained in document A/C.1/57/L.26, we were not able to reach a consensus.

Cuba deplors the fact that the Committee was unable to adopt a Chairman's text. Our delegation, along with many others, would have had no difficulty in supporting the first revised version of the draft resolution, which was issued on 18 October 2002. As members will recall, that revised version did not include any references to multilateralism — references which had been in the original draft.

The member States of the Non-Aligned Movement, in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee, had clearly stated the serious difficulties posed by the references to multilateralism. That is why all delegations in the Non-Aligned Movement welcomed the Chairman's decision not to insist on those references.

Unfortunately, in the second and third revised versions of the draft resolution, references to multilateralism inexplicably reappeared, even though the concerns of the Non-Aligned Movement in this respect were well known. I should like to elaborate on this point somewhat, because my delegation deems it important clearly to state its position so that there are no misunderstandings.

The views expressed to the President by Cuba, along with all of the other delegations of the Non-Aligned Movement, to the effect that it was better not to include references to multilateralism in the draft, did not mean — as some have tried to insinuate — that it wanted to give a particular slant to an item that is of interest to us all. On the contrary, we asked the Chairman to avoid those references simply because consultations on draft resolution A/C.1/57/L.10, submitted on behalf of the members of the Non-Aligned Movement, had made it clear that there were major differences of opinion on the issue and that it would be very difficult to reach a consensus.

For the Non-Aligned Movement, given the current international situation, it was absolutely indispensable that the First Committee this year adopt a broad-ranging and clear-cut resolution on multilateralism. For other delegations, obviously, this was not a priority, and they made that clear by voting against, or abstaining in the voting on, draft resolution A/C.1/57/L.10.

Although we hope that this situation will change eventually and that consensus on multilateralism can be achieved next year, it has become clear, as a result of an extensive consultation process, that not even the minimum prerequisites are in place to enable a consensus to be reached on the subject. Given these circumstances, it is clear that any reference to multilateralism in the Chairman's draft would only make the road to consensus more difficult.

We wish to reiterate that we would have preferred to avoid any mention of the issue of multilateralism, which would have allowed us to ensure the necessary consensus that a Chairman's text requires. However, because references to the issue were included, once again, in the second and third revised versions, my delegation had no other option than formally to present its amendments — something we had sought to avoid right up to the last minute.

Cuba and other delegations believe that the way in which the subject of multilateralism is addressed in operative paragraph 3 of draft resolution A/C.1/57/L.26/Rev.3 is clearly inadequate and that the language used does not meet minimum standards for the First Committee in this respect.

The wording of the amendments introduced by Cuba and Iran is consistent with operative paragraphs 1 and 2 of draft resolution entitled "Multilateral cooperation in disarmament and non-proliferation", which was adopted by the Committee by a broad majority this past Friday.

My delegation sincerely regrets the Chairman's decision to withdraw the draft resolution. Cuba reaffirms its full readiness to pursue consultations on the matter for however long it may take in an effort to win consensus. It is our view that there still is a real chance to attain such an objective.

We believe that the efforts you, Sir, have been making for a number of weeks now should not go to waste, and my delegation is therefore fully at your disposal to continue our efforts if you so desire.

Mr. Baeidi Nejad (Islamic Republic of Iran): The Chairman's efforts to reflect the general views and feelings of the whole Committee always offer a great opportunity for all of us to bridge existing gaps and to find a basic platform for the consolidation of our efforts to promote disarmament and non-proliferation.

In the context of the First Committee, the efforts by the Chairman to reflect the feelings of the members of the Committee with regard to the tragic incident of 11 September proved quite essential and fundamental. In fact, last year the Chairman's draft was the result of a demand on the part of the member States, regardless of political groupings or associations.

No Member State or group of States was deemed a suitable candidate to convey the horror and sadness of the entire international community regarding the events of 11 September. To translate those sentiments into words, an initiative transcending political considerations was needed. The Chairman's draft was therefore deeply appreciated by all delegations.

Since last year, developments have taken place that could manifest themselves in the agenda of the First Committee this year within the three new draft resolutions submitted to the Committee, namely "Promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation", "Measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction" and the draft resolution on the consolidation of compliance with the disarmament and non-proliferation treaties.

From the very beginning of the discussions, it was quite clear that important hurdles blocked the way towards finalization of the draft resolutions on these three issues. Some delegations were pessimistic, believing that efforts to finalize the draft would prove futile.

This is where the Chairman's draft could have played a role. It had been thought that by covering the three main areas of multilateralism, terrorism, and non-compliance and universality, the Committee could avert a chaotic situation and agree on a more general framework that would allow these essential issues to be kept on the agenda for further consideration.

But after about three weeks, the situation developed in another direction. The sponsors of the three draft resolutions managed to finalize them, and they were adopted by the Committee. The situation has thus evolved such that at this stage little room has been left for a draft by the Chairman.

There are other concerns with regard to draft resolution A/C.1/57/L.26/Rev.3. First, it is not very focused. The title of the draft, "Disarmament, non-proliferation and international peace and security", is

too general — it could apply to all of the Committee's draft resolutions. Secondly, on the reference to the adoption of disarmament and non-proliferation treaties, we know that it would be very difficult at this stage to reach a formula that could be agreed to by all. Thirdly, on multilateralism, it is also difficult at this stage to agree on language that could command consensus.

I think it would be quite misleading and simplistic to try to blame the failure to achieve consensus on the amendment contained in document A/C.1/57/L.60. Let me clarify the situation with regard to the amendment presented by my delegation and Cuba as contained in that document. Transparency and open-ended consultations with regard to the numerous drafts produced by the Chairman have been lacking. We did not submit the amendment with the intention that it be put to the vote; we introduced it only as a means of presenting our position in an open and transparent manner. We certainly did not do so in order to challenge the Chairman's efforts with regard to the text. In any case, we understood that the Chairman's draft could be adopted only by consensus and that if there was a consensus there would be a Chairman's text.

It is evident to all of us that, regardless of our amendment, a clear message has been conveyed from the major political groupings that there is no consensus on L.26/Rev.3. That lack of consensus is not limited to certain members or political groupings. There are major differences on draft resolution L.26/Rev.3. If you consider, Mr. Chairman, that there is still room for consultations on a revised text — which would be the fourth revision — my delegation would certainly hope for open-ended consultation to reach such a solution. But I think that, as I mentioned, the issues are very sensitive ones, and if time allows, we need to act intensively and consult among ourselves.

I want to make it clear that, as you have said, Sir, A/C.1/57/L.26/Rev.3 does not command consensus, but the blame should not be put on the amendment presented in A/C.1/57/L.60. At this stage, the major issues involved would be very difficult to resolve quickly.

Ms. Kumar (India): My delegation would like, at the end of this phase of the work of the First Committee, to express, very briefly, its appreciation for the manner in which you, Sir, have steered the work of the Committee to a very fruitful conclusion. Your

guidance has kept us all focused on cooperating to achieve our common objectives, and this session has produced a number of draft resolutions on issues of urgent import. My delegation would like to thank you particularly for the flexibility that you showed in dealing with the different groups in the Committee, which has been at the core of the successful outcome of our work.

Mr. Bar (Israel): I would like to deliver much the same message as my Indian colleague. But as there is no way in which I could do so more eloquently than she, I will just say, "Thank you".

Mr. Nielsen (Denmark): Before our work in the First Committee on disarmament matters comes to an end this year, I would like to say a few words on behalf of the European Union. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey, as well as the European Free Trade Association countries of the European Economic Area, Iceland and Norway, and Liechtenstein align themselves with this statement.

May I first of all express to you, Mr. Chairman, our genuine appreciation for the manner in which you have conducted our work. It has not always been easy, but you have shown great steadfastness and calm and exquisite politeness during all our deliberations, and you have gained our respect. We thank you for a job well done.

Likewise, I express our thanks to all the staff of the Secretariat for their hard work and the help they provided to all delegations during this session. Our special thanks go to Mr. Sattar, the Secretary of the Committee, for having once again rendered his valuable services and advice to all of us, and for his important contribution to the smooth running of our business.

As usual, the interpreters and translators have done an excellent and remarkable job, and we owe them our heartfelt thanks. We are also indebted to all the officials in charge of conference logistics — so crucial to the success of weeks of work.

Finally, I would like to convey to our fellow delegations our appreciation of the positive atmosphere and spirit of cooperation that have prevailed among

delegations this year, as they did last year. We are hopeful that this spirit will be maintained in the future.

Mr. Westdal (Canada): The Canadian delegation does not believe that there has to be a Chairman's draft resolution at every session, and we think that no precedent has been set one way or the other for the future. Under the circumstances, however, and given the effort that has been made over the past several weeks, we regret that you, Sir, concluded that you had to withdraw your draft resolution. There will of course be much comment about the process which you conducted. It is said that success has a thousand fathers, but failure is an orphan. But I do not think that a commentary about process should disguise the fact that there are fundamental differences of view in our group, and it was a hard circle that you were trying to square.

I would like to put on record, however, that Canada, with many others, would have been prepared to support draft resolution A/C.1/57/L.26/Rev.2. We valued its endorsement of multilateralism and its call for the strengthening of treaties. We regretted its loss of reference to universalization as compared with L.26/Rev.1, but we welcomed its emphasis on compliance and its positive and encouraging references to the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission. In fact, I am not certain that consensus could not have been achieved on L.26/Rev.2. Many parties had some reservations about different aspects of the text; Canada was among them. But in the interests of the group as a whole we would have been willing to bow, and, in the event, we think that many others would have been prepared to do the same thing.

As to the further revisions offered, I simply want to summarize what I said when explaining Canada's abstention on A/C.1/57/L.10. Whereas we have all agreed, as we did last year, that multilateralism is a core principle in our work, we do not accept the implication in the statement that it is *the* core principle, the only fundamental means.

All that said, I want to join others in commending your work, Mr. Chairman. We thank you for your fine purpose and your principled efforts throughout the course of our session. We know that you have wanted the very best for all of us from the start.

Ms. Notutela (South Africa): On behalf of the member States of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, and observers, I wish to thank you,

Mr. Chairman, for guiding the work of the Committee to a successful conclusion and for the considerable effort in trying to reach a consensus text. I would also like to thank the members of the bureau, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs Mr. Dhanapala and staff members of the Department for Disarmament Affairs for their role in assisting delegations during this session of the Committee. Lastly, I wish to thank the Conference Services interpreters and translators, who have been essential in the work of the Committee.

Mr. Ahmad (Bangladesh): I took the floor only to add our voice to those of others, to say that we have been really impressed by the excellent way that you, Mr. Chairman, have conducted the work of the Committee. Among other traits, you have shown extraordinary courage in conducting our work here. For me personally, it has been a learning process, since this is my first time at the General Assembly, and I am indebted to you, as well as to the other delegates, for what I have learned during this session. I thank you, the Secretariat and fellow delegates for all this.

Mr. Osei (Ghana): As a delegate of Ghana, I cannot but join the consensus of commendation of the good work that you, Mr. Chairman, have done. We all know and agree that disarmament is a process. Your role as Chairman of the First Committee for the fifty-seventh session has been part of this process. Each step in that process builds on what has been done in previous years and leads us towards our final objective.

We all know that the head that wears the crown always lies uneasy. We know your lot has not been an easy one, Mr. Chairman. If I may recall a traditional Ghanaian proverb: no one realizes a monkey is sweating because you see only the hair covering the body. I want to say that you have remained unruffled, unperturbed and dignified, and I commend that composure. When delegates in a moment of uncertainty look up to a Chairman and see such composure, it assures them that the captain at the helm of our affairs knows where he is going. When you know that your leader is certain where he is going, you can sit back and relax. I want to commend you for your composure and for the work that you have done to bring our deliberations to a successful outcome. We wish you well in your endeavours.

Mr. Al-Kulaib (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the Arab States Members of the United

Nations, I wish to express to you, Mr. Chairman, our thanks for your efforts so that the Committee's work could lead to resolutions in the service of international peace and security, with a view to eliminating weapons of mass destruction. I also wish to recognize the efforts that the Under-Secretary-General, the Secretariat, the bureau and the interpreters have made so that the work of the Committee would be successful.

The Chairman: I am touched by the warm expressions from all of you, and I thank you very much. Before I conclude this meeting, I would like to make the following remarks.

There has been a claim that there was a lack of transparency. I would like to say that this claim is a "terminological inexactitude", in the words used by the late Sir Winston Churchill because he could not say to the Members of Parliament that they were telling lies.

I have consulted extensively with the leadership of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and with my colleagues, the Permanent Representatives based here in New York, as heads of delegations. As late as 9.30 to 9.45, I was on the telephone with the Cuban Permanent Representative. Yesterday evening, I spent 45 minutes on the telephone with the Permanent Representative of Iran. Yesterday afternoon, I was with the leadership of the NAM, and this morning I met with the leadership of NAM. So, it is not correct that there was a lack of transparency.

Indeed, I was tempted, because, as the Canadian delegation said, there was overwhelming support for A/C.1/57/L.26/Rev.2. And I had a number of options, including whether to withdraw L.26/Rev.3 and ask the Committee to allow me to present L.26/Rev.2. As your Chair — indeed, as it should be for any Chair — I had to reflect and try to synthesize what I identified as the dominant issues cutting across our discussion. I did not share the view that any single delegation had exclusive proprietary rights to a concept which is so universally shared — that is, when delegations said that the Chair's text should not contain any reference to multilateralism.

The Chair had tried to reflect that as much as possible. Regardless to the Group to which the Chair belongs, once the Committee elects the Chair, the Chair must rise above that level so that we can serve the whole community. Therefore, my reintroduction of multilateralism into the document in question was partly out of my conviction and partly the result of

extensive consultations. When amendments came back this morning, I was given choices by one of the colleagues I discussed them with. I was told that either I should withdraw paragraph 3 or it must contain certain words.

I knew that what I was being asked would not fly and it became very clear to me that these amendments had come so late that the intention was probably not to have a consensus. I did not deem it political on the part

of the Chair to enter into a very contentious area to which a Chair's text should not be subject.

Tomorrow morning, I shall have an opportunity in my concluding remarks to thank everybody. It is now my duty to conclude the third phase of our work — action on all draft resolutions and decisions submitted under agenda items 57, 58 and 60 to 73.

The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.