



General Assembly

Seventy-seventh session

First Committee

1st meeting

Thursday, 29 September 2022, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

Chair: Mr. Pieris(Sri Lanka)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

International Security Committee (First Committee)
for the seventy-seventh session.

Agenda item 5

Election of the officers of the Main Committees

Election of the Chair and the Bureau of the First Committee

The Acting Chair: Allow me to extend a very warm welcome to all delegations.

Delegations will recall that on 7 June, the Committee elected His Excellency Mr. Magzhan Ilyassov, of the Republic of Kazakhstan, as Chair of the Committee for the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly (see A/C.1/76/PV.19). In a note dated 6 September 2022, the Permanent Mission of the Republic of the Philippines to the United Nations, in its capacity as Chair of the Group of Asia-Pacific States, informed the Secretariat of the decision of the Government of Kazakhstan to withdraw the candidature of Ambassador Ilyassov from the post of Chair of the Committee. In accordance with rule 105 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, I have been designated to chair this meeting until the Committee elects a new Chair.

Delegations will further recall that, pursuant to resolution 72/313 of 17 September 2018, the Chair of the Committee is to be nominated by the Group of Asia-Pacific States. In that regard, the Secretariat has been informed that agreement has been reached by the Group to nominate His Excellency Mr. Mohan Pieris, Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations, to the post of Chair of the Disarmament and

Ambassador Pieris was appointed Permanent Representative in January 2021. He is the former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka and, prior to that, held the position of Attorney General. He has made a stellar contribution to academia and policymaking in Sri Lanka, earning him many awards in the legal field. Ambassador Pieris has extensive experience working with and within the United Nations, including on the United Nations Human Rights Council and on disarmament issues.

Since there are no other nominations from the Group of Asia-Pacific States, may I take it that, in accordance with rule 103 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and established practice, the First Committee wishes to dispense with the secret ballot and to elect by acclamation Ambassador Mohan Pieris of Sri Lanka as the Chair of the First Committee for the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly?

It was so decided.

The Acting Chair: I hereby declare Ambassador Mohan Pieris of Sri Lanka elected by acclamation as Chair of the First Committee for the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly. On behalf of all delegations, I warmly congratulate Ambassador Pieris on his election. I am certain that he will receive the support and cooperation of each and every delegation in executing his mandate to guide the work of the current session of the First Committee.

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I now invite Ambassador Pieris to the rostrum to preside over the meeting.

The Chair took the chair.

The Chair: I should like to express my deepest appreciation to all member States for the privilege and distinction they have bestowed upon my country and on me personally through my election as Chair of this very important Committee of the General Assembly. I am indeed honoured and deeply indebted to all of members for the trust and confidence they have placed in me. I wish to assure all delegations that I shall do my utmost to discharge my responsibilities to ensure that our work is carried out efficiently and that our endeavours are met with success. I hope that our deliberations will be guided by a spirit of consensus and understanding.

I would like to thank Ambassador Magzhan Ilyassov of Kazakhstan for his leadership in steering preparatory arrangements for the current session of the Assembly. As his successor, I look forward to working closely with the other members of the Bureau, namely, Mr. Nazim Khaldi of Algeria, Mr. Daniel Roethlin of Austria, Mr. Marcelo Zambrana Torrelío of the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Ms. Szilvia Balázs of Hungary.

At this time, I would also like to recognize the support of the Secretariat, namely, the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management.

Before proceeding to the matters at hand, I am sure that I speak on behalf of the entire membership of the Committee in commending Ambassador Omar Hilale of Morocco for the skilful and effective manner in which he conducted the proceedings of the First Committee at its seventy-sixth session. I should also like to pay tribute to other members of the previous Bureau for all their hard work in ensuring the success of the session.

Organization of work

The Chair: The Committee has before it document A/C.1/77/1, containing the 22 agenda items allocated to the Committee by the General Assembly at its 3rd plenary meeting, on 16 September (see A/77/PV.3).

The Committee also has before it documents A/C.1/77/CRP.1 and A/C.1/77/CRP.2. Document A/C.1/77/CRP.1 contains the Committee's proposed programme of work and timetable for 2022. A/C.1/77/CRP.2 is the draft indicative timetable for structured

discussion of specific subjects on the adopted thematic approach on disarmament and international security agenda items.

Before examining these documents one by one, with the Committee's indulgence I should like to draw the Committee's attention to the relevant rules and recommendations of the General Assembly regarding the work of the Main Committees, contained in the report of the General Committee issued as document A/77/250.

In order to make full use of the time and conference services made available to the Committee, with members' cooperation and support, I shall convene the meetings of the Committee at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. sharp. Similarly, I shall adjourn the meetings punctually at 1 p.m. and 6 p.m., respectively. I therefore appeal to all speakers, especially the first three speakers at a given meeting, to kindly be present in the conference room on time. In that connection, I sincerely hope that all delegations will make a special effort during this session to enable the Committee to maintain or even improve the record of utilization of conference facilities.

I should like to remind members that the Assembly has decided to continue its practice during this session of waiving the requirement that at least one-quarter of the members be present to declare a Main Committee meeting open and permit the debate to proceed. The Assembly made this recommendation on the understanding that such a departure from the rules did not involve any permanent change in the provisions of rules 67 and 108 of its rules of procedure.

Returning to the organization of work of the Committee and the agenda items allocated to the Committee, as contained in document A/C.1/77/1, I would like to draw the attention of the members of the Committee to the following.

Some portions of the annual report of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which is to be considered directly in plenary meeting under item 89, deal with the subject matter of item 99, "General and complete disarmament". I understand that the Assembly is still to determine the date of consideration of the report of IAEA. Once that is decided, it will be communicated to Committee members.

Agenda item 124, "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly", is allocated to the First Committee for the purpose of discussing its working methods, as

well as considering and taking action on its tentative programme of work for the Committee's next session in 2023.

Agenda item 139, "Programme planning", is allocated to all the Main Committees and the plenary of the General Assembly. This is to enhance discussion of evaluation, planning, budgeting and monitoring reports.

In connection with those two agenda items, the attention of the Committee is invited to consider a note by the Secretariat contained in document A/C.1/77/INF/4, which highlights relevant provisions of resolutions 75/325, on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, and 76/236, on programme planning.

Let us now turn our attention to the Committee's proposed programme of work and timetable, as outlined in document A/C.1/77/CRP.1 and which is based on decision 76/519, of 6 December 2021.

As indicated in A/C.1/77/CRP.1, the First Committee will commence its substantive work on Monday, 3 October. It will hold a total of 28 meetings and should conclude its work by 4 November, as approved by the General Assembly. There are no formal meetings of the Committee scheduled on Wednesday, 5 October, or Monday, 24 October, since the United Nations will observe the floating holidays of Yom Kippur and Diwali, respectively.

In accordance with the practice established prior to the current coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, and as currently reflected in the provisional programme of work for this session, the First Committee will conduct its work in three phases. The first phase is the general debate on all agenda items, the second is the thematic discussion on specific subjects and the third is action on all draft proposals. In addition, a meeting on 13 October has been identified for a debate on the working methods of the First Committee and on programme planning. On 27 October, the joint panel discussion of the First and Fourth Committees on possible challenges to space security and sustainability will take place. I shall now reflect briefly on what we should expect during the session.

The first phase, the general debate on all items, will run from 3 to 12 October for a total of eight meetings, with the Committee meeting all day on 12 October. Also, during the general debate segment, the President of the General Assembly will address the First Committee on Tuesday, 4 October. At the end

of the general debate, the Committee will devote at least half a meeting — perhaps 90 minutes — to hear statements by representatives of civil society in an informal setting — it is important to note that it will be an informal setting — following which delegations will be given the floor to make comments or pose questions to the speakers.

To maximize the time available to us during the general debate, I propose that we maintain the practice of using a rolling list of speakers, which is currently open to all delegations wishing to take the floor. As in previous years, inscription on the list of speakers is through the eSpeakers tool on the e-deleGATE portal. I am aware that a considerable number of delegations have already inscribed their names on the list, and I invite those who intend to speak but have not yet inscribed to do so as soon as possible. As indicated in the programme of work, the list of speakers for the general debate will be closed on Tuesday, 4 October, at 6 p.m. I would also like to remind all delegations inscribing on the list to keep in mind that a rolling list implies that they should be prepared to intervene at any time, possibly even one meeting sooner than they had originally planned to speak.

To make the most efficient use of the resources allocated to us, I would like to urge all delegations taking the floor to kindly respect the time limits for statements of 8 minutes, when speaking in a national capacity, and 12 minutes for those speaking on behalf of groups of delegations. I would encourage members to keep to these time limits to address genuine time management concerns expressed by delegations over the years. To assist representatives in this regard, the buzzer system will be resumed, in keeping with the pre-COVID-19 practice. Delegations with relatively long statements should deliver a concise summary of their text and submit the full statement in written form for posting on eStatements.

As noted earlier, on Thursday, 13 October, the debate on the working methods of the First Committee and on programme planning will take place. In accordance with paragraph 16 of resolution 76/236, whenever the Committee for Programme and Coordination cannot provide conclusions and recommendations on a given subprogramme or programme of the proposed programme budget, the plenary or the relevant Main Committee or Main Committees of the General Assembly responsible for those mandates will consider the said subprogramme or programme at the very

start of its session in order to provide any conclusions and recommendations to the Fifth Committee, at the earliest opportunity, and no later than four weeks after the start of the session, for timely consideration by the Fifth Committee. The Committee for Programme and Coordination recommended, in line with resolution 76/236, that the Assembly, at its seventy-seventh session, review the programme plan of programme 3, Disarmament, under the agenda item "Programme planning". The Committee's meeting of 13 October is in response to that mandate. I intend to submit a Chair's summary of the discussions on the disarmament programme to the Chair of the Fifth Committee following the debate.

Similarly, based on the feedback from delegations, as Chair I will summarize the key points raised by Committee members on the working methods of the Committee for onward transmission to the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly.

In scheduling the meeting on programme planning and methods of work of the Committee this session, there is one fewer meeting for the second stage of the Committee's work, which will focus on thematic discussion on specific subjects, as well as the introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions and decisions submitted under the Committee's agenda items. That segment will run from Friday, 14 October, to Thursday, 27 October, for a total of 11 meetings, with the Committee meeting all day on Tuesday, 18 and 25 October. In line with the Committee's established practice, the details of the programme of work for our thematic segment are contained in the indicative timetable outlined in document A/C.1/77/CRP.2.

On 14 October, the Committee will have its usual exchange with the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs on the follow-up of resolutions and decisions adopted by the Committee at its previous sessions and presentation of reports.

The joint panel discussion of the First and Fourth Committees on possible challenges to space security and sustainability, will take place on the morning of 27 October, and the Committee will conclude its thematic discussion in the afternoon of that day. The proposed programme for the joint panel discussion has been issued as document A/C.1/77/CRP.3, and a copy is available on the First Committee's website.

During the second phase, the Committee will take up the respective subject areas listed in the timetable and comprising the seven clusters on which it has traditionally focused during this phase of its work. They are as follows: nuclear weapons; other weapons of mass destruction; outer space (disarmament aspects); conventional weapons; other disarmament measures and international security; regional disarmament and security; and disarmament machinery. For each of those seven clusters, our proceedings will comprise two parts. The first will begin in a formal mode with a panel or guest speakers, as applicable, followed by an informal question-and-answer segment, during which delegations taking the floor are encouraged to ask concise questions rather than read out statements. The second part will be in a formal mode and will consist of interventions by delegations, including the introduction of draft resolutions and decisions. Document A/C.1/77/CRP.2 as issued, reflects all panels and briefings during the thematic segment.

Given time constraints this year, briefers this year are limited to the chairs of disarmament bodies whose work has been completed or which have issued a mandated interim report. Other chairs will be invited to present their reports next year after their respective groups would have completed their mandated work. It is my understanding that some of the presentations this year will be pre-recorded to facilitate participation by briefers.

On 25 October, the Committee will hold the traditional certificate award ceremony for graduating Disarmament Fellows.

The list of speakers for the thematic segment, as well as for the meeting on working methods and programme planning, will open on Thursday, 6 October, via the e-deleGATE portal of the Committee.

As indicated on the programme of work, the deadline for inscription on the list of speakers for the thematic discussions is Tuesday, 11 October, at 6 p.m. All delegations wishing to take the floor during that segment of our work are therefore urged to make every effort to inscribe on the list of speakers before the stipulated deadline.

During the thematic segment, delegations taking the floor are strongly encouraged to limit statements in their national capacity to five minutes, while statements on behalf of a group of countries should not exceed seven minutes. With members' understanding, I

intend to apply these time limits faithfully to enable the Committee to complete its work on schedule.

The third and last segment of the work of the Committee — namely, action on all draft resolutions and decisions — will run from Friday, 28 October, to Friday, 4 November, for a total of six meetings. As indicated in the programme of work, the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions and decisions is Thursday, 13 October, at noon. Compliance with that deadline is important to ensure the timely issuance of all drafts in all official languages.

Sponsors and co-sponsors of draft proposals wishing to schedule informal consultations on their drafts are encouraged to begin as soon as possible in order to ensure that they have sufficient time for those consultations. The Secretariat has introduced a new system this year to allow for the virtual booking of the conference room. Given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, delegations may wish to consider also convening virtual informal consultations, while ensuring that they do not clash with those listed in the schedule circulated by the Secretariat.

Taking into consideration the lessons learned from the Committee's experience over the years on the need for the early determination of the programme budget implications of draft resolutions and decisions before the Committee, delegations organizing informal consultations on their drafts are encouraged to engage Secretariat officials in the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Committee Secretary for guidance. At the same time, I would like to remind all delegations of the views expressed by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions regarding the use of the phrase "within existing resources", as set out in document A/54/7. Accordingly, the use of that phrase in draft resolutions and decisions should be avoided.

There is a briefing immediately after the adjournment of this meeting at which senior United Nations officials will be available to brief delegations on the programme budget implications process. In addition, United Nations editors will make a presentation on language and pitfalls when it comes to draft proposals. I encourage members to actively participate in that exchange.

All submitted draft proposals to be issued as L. documents will continue to be listed in a conference room paper and grouped under the seven thematic clusters. Delegations are reminded that to be reflected

as co-sponsors of an issued draft proposal, they must co-sponsor the text prior to the deadline for submission to the Secretariat. Delegations are further reminded that the sponsoring of draft proposals will continue through the eSponsorship tool on the e-deleGATE portal. The technical briefing today by the Secretariat will also cover that tool.

During the action phase, the Committee will continue to be guided by the informal papers issued by the Secretariat and containing the draft resolutions and decisions on which action will be taken each day. The informal papers will be revised by the Secretariat on a daily basis to reflect the drafts that are ready for action at each of the remaining meetings. In that regard, I propose that the Committee retain the procedure it has followed in previous years, by which draft resolutions and decisions are grouped under the seven thematic clusters. Also, during the action phase, a draft provisional programme of work and timetable for the next year, to be issued as a conference room paper, will be circulated for the Committee's consideration and action.

Closer to the final phase of our work, further information will be provided on how we will proceed, including the traditional ground rules for taking action on draft resolutions and decisions, prepared by the Secretariat and made available on the e-deleGATE portal.

The documents before the Committee this session, including those already issued or forthcoming, are listed in information document A/C.1/77/INF/1. I have been informed that the report of the Conference on Disarmament will be issued in time for the thematic discussion. Another forthcoming document is the list of participants, which will be issued as A/C.1/77/INF/2. The eList of participants module has been deployed for the Main Committees for the seventy-seventh session. Permanent Missions' focal points should submit their participants' names as soon as possible. Each Mission will only have to make a single submission for all the Main Committees for the session. The deadline for submission is the end of October.

The Department for Global Communication will issue press releases with daily coverage of First Committee proceedings, which will be posted on the United Nations website a few hours after each meeting.

The Committee will now consider document A/C.1/77/CRP.1. Before taking action on A/C.1/77/

CRP.1, does any delegation wish to take the floor at this time for comments or questions on the information I have provided so far regarding the organization of the Committee's work for this session?

Mr. Shevchenko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We should like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election.

With respect to organizational issues, we wish to place on the record of today's meeting that the Russian delegation continues to experience problems with the issuance of United States visas. That is a real hindrance to our work. We recall that, pursuant to the 1947 Headquarters Agreement, the United States is obligated to provide free access to United Nations Headquarters to all official representatives of Member States without exception and to issue them with visas without charge and as promptly as possible. By refusing to provide visas to Russians delegations, Washington is again in violation of its obligations.

We ask the Secretary-General and the leadership of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs to take steps and measures to address this unacceptable situation.

The Chair: I am informed that this issue has been raised in the Committee on Relations with the Host Country, where such matters are addressed, and with the Secretariat. We will continue to use our good offices with the authorities of the host country and the European Union with regard to this matter.

May I take it that the Committee wishes to proceed in accordance with the provisional programme of work and timetable contained in document A/C.1/77/CRP.1?

It was so decided.

The Chair: We shall now proceed to consider the draft indicative timetable contained in document A/C.1/77/CRP.2.

As I hear no comments or questions, may I take it that the Committee wishes to proceed in accordance with the draft indicative timetable contained in document A/C.1/77/CRP.2.?

It was so decided.

The Chair: On the question of explanations of vote and rights of reply, I would recall the briefing on organizational arrangements for the Committee that was held on 16 September, during which the Bureau

proposed the following measures on an exceptional basis and without setting any precedent, given the record number of statements and draft proposals expected this year.

First, it is proposed that statements in the exercise of the right of reply not exceed five minutes for the first intervention and three minutes for the second. Statements in exercise of the right of reply delivered in person will continue to be included in the verbatim records and will continue to be heard at the end of each meeting or at the end of the day if two meetings are scheduled for that given day.

Secondly, it is proposed that explanations of vote be limited to five minutes. Longer statements can be submitted to eStatements for the record.

In line with the decision taken by the Assembly on 16 September, upon the recommendation of the General Committee, points of order shall be limited to five minutes.

May I take it that the Committee wishes to proceed in accordance with the proposed modalities that I have just outlined?

It was so decided.

The Chair: The Bureau has received a request for the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Tatiana Valovaya, to address the First Committee at its seventy-seventh session. After consulting within the respective regional groups, it is proposed that Ms. Valovaya address the First Committee on Wednesday, 12 October, at the end of the general debate.

May I take it that the Committee decides to hear an address by the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament?

It was so decided.

The Chair: I would like to draw members' attention once again to agenda item 5, "Election of the officers of the Main Committees", and to rule 99 (a) of the rules of procedure, which reads as follows:

"All the Main Committees shall, at least three months before the opening of the session, elect a Chairman. Elections of the other officers provided for in rule 103 shall be held at the latest by the end of the first week of the session."

In this connection, the General Assembly, in its resolution 72/313 of 20 September 2018, decided to establish the pattern for the rotation of the Chairs of the Main Committees for the forthcoming 10 sessions of the General Assembly, namely, from the seventy-fourth to the eighty-third session. In accordance with the annex to that resolution, the Chair of the First Committee will be nominated by the Group of Eastern European States for the seventy-eighth session in 2023.

In the light of that provision, I would like to propose that the First Committee consider this item sometime in May or June 2023, about three months before the opening of the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly.

If I hear no objection, may I take it that the Committee wishes to proceed accordingly?

It was so decided.

The Chair: I wish to announce that this will be the last meeting of the First Committee for Mr. Thomas Markram, Director and Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs. It is

no secret that his contribution to the First Committee and other United Nations meetings on disarmament and international security matters has been truly significant, and I would like the Committee to give him a round of applause in appreciation as we wish him all the best.

The members of the Committee applauded Mr. Markram.

The Chair: I would like to quote Rudyard Kipling for Mr. Markram in saying, “something ere the end/ Some work of noble note, may yet be done”. We expect Mr. Markram to be with us much longer in some capacity or another.

In accordance with our programme of work and timetable, the Committee will meet again on Monday, 3 October, at 10 a.m. sharp in this conference room to begin its substantive work with the general debate. I look forward to working closely with all members in the coming weeks.

The meeting rose at 3.50 p.m.