



General Assembly

Seventy-seventh session

First Committee

33rd meeting

Thursday, 1 June 2023, 11:20 a.m.
New York

Official Records

Chair: Mr. Pieris(Sri Lanka)

The meeting was called to order at 11.20 a.m.

Election of the officers of the Main Committees

Election of the Chair and the Bureau of the First Committee

The Chair: In accordance with rules 99 (a) and 103 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, this meeting has been convened to elect the Chair and other members of the Bureau of the First Committee for the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly.

We shall first take up the election of the Chair of the First Committee for the forthcoming seventy-eighth session. Members will recall that, pursuant to resolution 72/313, of 17 September 2018, which established the pattern for the rotation of the Chairs of the Main Committees for the seventy-fourth to the eighty-third sessions, the Chair of the First Committee at the seventy-eighth session is to be nominated by the Group of Eastern European States. In that regard, I understand that the Group has decided to nominate His Excellency Ambassador Rytis Paulauskas of the Republic of Lithuania for the position of Chair of the First Committee at its seventy-eighth session.

Ambassador Paulauskas has extensive experience in multilateral and disarmament affairs and has served as Permanent Representative of the Lithuania to the United Nations since October 2020. Prior to his current assignment, he served as Director of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Lithuania; Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva from 2012 to 2016; and Director of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in

Europe (OSCE) Chairmanship Department and the Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the United Nations, the OSCE, the International Atomic Energy Agency and other international organizations in Vienna from 2003 to 2008. Ambassador Paulauskas has also served Vice-Chair of the ninth Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, in 2015; and as Vice-President of the 102nd session of the International Labour Conference in 2013.

Since there are no other nominations from the Group of Eastern European 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 a secret ballot and to elect by acclamation Ambassador Rytis Paulauskas of the Republic of Lithuania as Chair of the First Committee for the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly?

It was so decided.

The Chair: I hereby declare Ambassador Rytis Paulauskas of the Republic of Lithuania elected by acclamation as Chair of the First Committee for the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly. On behalf of all delegations, I warmly congratulate Ambassador Paulauskas on his election. I am certain that he will receive the support and cooperation of each and every delegation in exercising his mandate to guide the work of the First Committee at its seventy-eighth session.

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I now give the floor to the Chair-elect of the of the First Committee at its seventy-eighth session, His Excellency Ambassador Rytis Paulauskas of Lithuania, to make a statement.

Mr. Paulauskas (Lithuania): On behalf of the Government of Lithuania, I would like to express our gratitude for members' decision to elect me to the position of Chair of the First Committee for the seventy eighth session of the General Assembly. In the coming weeks and months, my team and I will be working closely with everyone to achieve progress on the international disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation agenda for the benefit of international security. Current geopolitical realities will make the task a genuine challenge for all of us.

I would like to commend you, Ambassador Pieris, on your achievements. During his outstanding term as Chair of the First Committee at the seventy-seventh session of General Assembly, Ambassador Pieris made an important contribution to the success of the work of the First Committee. I think that I can speak for all gathered here today in expressing our sincere gratitude to you, Sir, for your leadership, dedication and wisdom. We are truly grateful to your team and the Secretariat for their commitment and professionalism. I also would like to personally thank my colleague and friend Ambassador Omar Hilale, Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations and the Chair of the First committee at its seventy-sixth session, for his valuable time and insights, which he shared with me during our consultations in preparing me to fill my new role.

Lithuania will assume the chairmanship of the First Committee in September. We will carry out our functions with a great sense of responsibility. We will strive to ensure that the Committee continues to fulfil its mandate in an efficient and inclusive way. That can be achieved only with members' meaningful engagement and cooperation. I and my team are also very much counting on the dedicated support and input of our Bureau representing all regional groups at the United Nations. We are ready for and open to consultations and cooperation. We highly value the significant support and cooperation from Her Excellency Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, and all colleagues in the Secretariat, whom this body continues to benefit from.

Let me conclude by reiterating my sincere thanks to members for the confidence that they have placed in us and by wishing the First Committee success in our work.

The Chair: I thank Ambassador Paulauskas for his statement.

We will now proceed with the election of other members of the Bureau of the First Committee for the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly, beginning with the Vice-Chairs. It is my pleasure to present to the Committee the following nominations.

The Group of African States has nominated Mr. Yaseen Lagardien, First Secretary of Permanent Mission of South Africa to the United Nations; the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States has nominated Mr. Matías Andrés Eustathiou de los Santos, Second Secretary of the Permanent Mission of Uruguay to the United Nations; and the Group of Western European and other States has endorsed Ms. Christine Nam, First Secretary of the Permanent Mission of New Zealand to the United Nations.

Bearing in mind rule 103 of the rules of procedure and recalling paragraph 16 of decision 34/401, may I take it that the Committee wishes to dispense with a secret ballot and elect those candidates by acclamation?

It was so decided.

The Chair: With respect to the position of Rapporteur, the Group of Asia-Pacific States has endorsed Mr. Heidar Ali Balouji, First Counsellor of the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations. May I take it that the Committee wishes to elect Mr. Heidar Ali Balouji of the Islamic Republic of Iran by acclamation as Rapporteur of the First Committee for the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly?

It was so decided.

The Chair: On behalf of the Committee, I should like to express my warmest congratulations to Mr. Matías Andrés Eustathiou de los Santos of Uruguay, Mr. Yaseen Lagardien of South Africa and Ms. Christine Nam of New Zealand on their election as Vice-Chairs of the First Committee, and to Mr. Heidar Ali Balouji of the Islamic Republic of Iran on his election as Rapporteur.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I congratulate the Chair-elect on his election.

While the United States ultimately decided not to disrupt the First Committee's important substantive work with procedural actions at this morning's meeting, we must express our deep concern about the election of Iran as Rapporteur for the First Committee's Bureau. Given Iran's persistent violations of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015), including pertaining to its ballistic-missile programme, its ongoing efforts to undermine international security and its failure to fully cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), a representative of Iran's Government is unfit to serve in a leadership position within the Committee, even if such a position is largely ceremonial.

Again and again, Iran continues to take actions, within its borders and throughout the world, that inflict violence, violate human rights and incite conflict. Moreover, it continues to transfer arms in violation of United Nations arms embargoes. It is especially troublesome to see a representative of Iran's Government serve in the Committee's leadership, which aims to address the very security problems that Tehran itself perpetuates. Iran's direct support of Russia's war against Ukraine is just one example of its active efforts to undermine international peace and security. Iran has transferred at least 400 armed unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to Russia, which Russia has used to target critical infrastructure and kill civilians in Ukraine. Security Council resolution 2231 (2015) prohibits the transfer of certain types of UAVs, including some that Iran has transferred to Russia. Such support is characteristic of the destabilizing role that Iran has played abroad, including in the Middle East. It has consistently exported violence and weaponry to neighbouring countries, causing death and destruction from Syria to Iraq, to Yemen and elsewhere.

Finally, Iran has continued to expand its uranium-enrichment activities, operate advanced centrifuges and accumulate stocks of highly enriched uranium. The IAEA continues to report outstanding concerns regarding the possible presence of nuclear material at some locations in Iran. Iran's continued failure to provide its full cooperation means that the IAEA remains unable to confirm the correctness and completeness of Iran's declarations under its Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement or to provide assurance that Iran's nuclear programme is exclusively peaceful.

The first draft resolution that the Committee ever adopted (resolution 1 (I)) was aimed at addressing the problems raised by the discovery of atomic energy. That

Iran will now serve as Rapporteur of the Committee, while failing to fully cooperate with the IAEA, undermines the credibility of the Committee's work. While we fully respect the prerogatives of the regional groups to select their candidates for United Nations offices, we ask them to consider their selections carefully and responsibly. It is absurd beyond contemplation that Iran would serve in a position of leadership on the Disarmament and International Security Committee. We call on the Iranian Government to end its contravention of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015), to stop undermining international peace and security and to cooperate fully with the IAEA. Until it does, we will continue to oppose Iran's attempts at leadership throughout the United Nations system.

Mr. Shaked (Israel): Israel wishes to disassociate itself from the election of the representative of Iran as a member of the First Committee's Bureau. We believe that it is absurd that the representative of a country that systematically violates all of its international obligations with the regard to disarmament will serve on the Bureau of a Committee that seeks to promote disarmament, peace and security. Instead of electing Iran to the Bureau, everyone should condemn Iran's non-compliance. We would nevertheless like to note that this statement refers only to the election of Iran, not to any of the other Bureau members.

Mr. Ghadirkhomi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I am obliged once again to take the floor briefly to respond to the statements made by the representatives of the United States and the Israeli regime.

I would like to refer to the statement I made at the seventy-fourth plenary meeting (see A/77/PV.74) of the General Assembly earlier today, under agenda item 6. I would like to avoid repeating the same remarks. We are, however, very grateful to all Member States that have supported the election of Mr. Ali Balouji of the Permanent Mission of Islamic Republic of Iran as Rapporteur of the First Committee at the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly. But we regret that certain members of this forum have misused the agenda item to pursue political agendas. We have responded to the repeated allegations, including those related to the ongoing crisis in Ukraine, under the relevant items. The allegations are unquestionably based on flawed narratives and political motives. It is ironic that United States accuses us of violating Security

Council resolution 2231 (2015), while it is the State that unilaterally withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in violation of resolution 2231 (2015).

The United States and the Israeli regime have consistently made claims about Iran's nuclear programme without providing concrete or credible evidence to support their allegations. The International Atomic Energy Agency, the independent nuclear watchdog, has repeatedly verified Iran's compliance with its obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The absence of substantial evidence has undermined the credibility of their accusations. The United States and the Israeli regime have exhibited double standards against Iran. While Iran's nuclear programme has undergone inspections and scrutiny, Israel, a non-signatory to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, possesses a substantial nuclear arsenal, with little to no international oversight. The blatant hypocrisy undermines their credibility in accusing Iran of pursuing nuclear weapons.

On the other hand, the United States and the Israeli regime have been involved in numerous sabotage activities, military interventions and covert operations in the region, violating international law. The disparity between Iran's adherence to international law and the actions of its accusers calls into question the credibility of their accusations. My Government has stated frequently its clear, consistent and unwavering position regarding the conflict in Ukraine. At the same time, I would like to once again reiterate my delegation's commitment to the peaceful settlement of the conflict, as well as to achieving lasting peace in the region. The Islamic Republic of Iran firmly stands with the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, including the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all States. I once again categorically reject

the unsubstantiated claims that Iran has transferred any arms for use in the conflict in Ukraine.

I would like to repeat that my Government is very grateful for the support that we received from the broader membership of the United Nation for its candidature.

The Chair: Before adjourning the meeting, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the memory of His Excellency Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, former Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, who passed away on 27 May.

As a true believer in multilateral diplomacy, Mr. Dhanapala left a lasting legacy, leading international efforts to revitalize multilateral disarmament. His lifelong devotion to the cause of disarmament was an inspiration for many of us, including as President of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We mourn the loss of Mr. Dhanapala, and, on behalf of the Committee, I convey our heartfelt condolences to his family.

Lastly, on behalf of all delegations, let me thank the members of the Bureau of the seventy-seventh session — Mrs. Szilvia Balázs of Hungary, Mr. Daniel Roethlin of Austria and Mr. Marcelo Zambrana Torrelío of the Plurinational State of Bolivia — as well as Rapporteur Nazim Khaldi of Algeria, for their remarkable contributions in guiding the work of the Committee to a successful conclusion.

I would also like to use this opportunity to extend a heartfelt thanks once again to all delegations for their support and cooperation throughout my term as Chair of the First Committee during the seventy-seventh session.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.