



General Assembly

Fifty-second Session

4th plenary meeting
Friday, 19 September 1997, 11 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Udovenko (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

Item 8 of the provisional agenda

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work: first report of the General Committee (A/52/250)

The President: This morning, the Assembly will consider the first report of the General Committee, which has been circulated in document A/52/250. I will refer to specific sections and paragraphs of the report which contain recommendations for consideration by the Assembly.

In paragraph 2 of its report, the General Committee draws the attention of the General Assembly to the provisions reproduced in annexes V, VI, VII and VIII to its rules of procedure.

May I take it that the Assembly takes note of those provisions? I see no objection.

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 3, the General Committee took note of General Assembly resolution 48/264 of 29 July 1994, entitled "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly", and of annex I thereto, entitled "Guidelines on the rationalization of the agenda of the General Assembly". The General Committee also took note of annex I to General Assembly resolution 50/227 of 24 May 1996, entitled "Further measures for the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the

economic, social and related fields". The provisions of the resolutions are reflected in the document before the General Assembly under the relevant headings.

We shall now examine section II of the report, which deals with the organization of the session.

We turn first to section II.B, which deals with the rationalization of work of the General Assembly. In paragraph 6, the General Committee draws the attention of the General Assembly to paragraph 5 of the annex to resolution 45/45, regarding certain Main Committees meeting in sequential order, and to paragraph 23 of annex I of resolution 50/227, concerning the discussions in the Second and Third Committees, which, to the extent feasible, should not commence until after the end of the general debate in the plenary meetings of the General Assembly.

May I take it that the General Assembly takes note of paragraph 6? I see no objection.

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 7, the General Committee took note of the fact that measures introduced to reduce costs relating to overtime would be strictly enforced.

In section II.C, which relates to the closing date of the fifty-second session, the General Committee recommends to the General Assembly that the fifty-

second session recess not later than Tuesday, 16 December this year.

May I take it that the Assembly approves that recommendation?

I see no objection.

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 9, the General Committee draws the attention of the General Assembly to the fact that the closing date of the fifty-second session will be subject to the implementation of resolution 51/241 of 31 July 1997 on the strengthening of the United Nations system.

May I take it that the General Assembly takes note of paragraph 9?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 10, the General Committee recommends to the Assembly that all the Main Committees should make every effort to complete their work by Friday, 28 November 1997.

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

I see no objection.

It was so decided.

The President: Next, we turn to section II.D, concerning the schedule of meetings. With regard to paragraph 11, the General Committee recommends to the General Assembly that morning meetings should start at 10 a.m. promptly for all plenary meetings and meetings of the Main Committees.

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: I should also like to remind members that, for afternoon meetings, I intend to begin promptly at 3 p.m.

In the same paragraph, the General Committee recommends to the Assembly that, as a cost-saving

measure, plenary meetings and meetings of the Main Committees, including informal consultations, be adjourned by 6 p.m. and that no meetings be held on weekends. The Committee further recommends to the General Assembly that this cost-saving measure should also apply, for the remainder of 1997, to meetings on the calendar of conferences and meetings.

May I take it that the General Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 12, the General Committee recommends that, in order to avoid the late start of meetings, the General Assembly should waive the requirement of the presence of at least one third of the members to declare a plenary meeting open and permit the debate to proceed, and of at least one quarter of the members to declare a meeting of a Main Committee open and permit the debate to proceed.

May I take it that the General Assembly approves this recommendation?

I see no objection.

It was so decided.

The President: For that matter, I should like to endorse strongly the practical suggestions that were made at previous sessions, for each delegation to designate someone to be present at the scheduled time. I genuinely hope that all delegations will cooperate.

In paragraph 13, the General Committee recommends to the General Assembly that delegations should be reminded of the utmost importance of punctuality.

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

I see no objection.

It was so decided.

The President: I sincerely hope that all delegations will make a special effort to cooperate in this regard so that all meetings can start promptly at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.

In section II.E, concerning the general debate, the General Committee recommends that the general debate begin on Monday, 22 September, and end by Friday, 10 October 1997. The General Committee also recommends that the list of speakers in the general debate be closed on Wednesday, 24 September, at 6 p.m.

May I consider that the General Assembly approves the recommendations contained in paragraph 14?

It was so decided.

The President: In view of the very large number of speakers already inscribed, I urge representatives to speak in the general debate in the order in which they appear on the list of speakers. Those who are unable to speak at the scheduled time will be put at the end of the list for that meeting.

In paragraph 15, the General Committee draws the General Assembly's attention to a previous decision of the Assembly to prohibit the practice of expressing congratulations inside the General Assembly Hall after a speech has been delivered. The Committee recommends that this provision should also apply during the fifty-second session.

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

I see no objection.

It was so decided.

The President: The General Committee also recommends to the General Assembly that, after delivering their statements, speakers in the general debate should leave the General Assembly Hall through room GA-200, which is located behind the podium, before returning to their seats.

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: We shall now turn to section II.F.

May I take it that the Assembly takes note of the provisions concerning explanation of vote and right of reply contained in paragraph 16?

It was so decided.

The President: May I further take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to limit points of order to five minutes, as recommended in paragraph 17?

I see no objection.

It was so decided.

The President: May I take it that the Assembly takes note of the provisions regarding the length of statements contained in paragraph 18?

It was so decided.

The President: Section II.G deals with records of meetings.

In paragraph 19, the General Committee took note of the fact that verbatim records would be provided during the fifty-second session for the plenary meetings of the General Assembly and meetings of the First Committee, and that summary records would be provided for the meetings of the General Committee and the other Main Committees of the Assembly.

May I take it that the Assembly approves the recommendation contained in paragraph 19 concerning transcriptions of the debates of some of the meetings of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)?

It was so decided.

The President: May I take it that the Assembly approves the recommendation also contained in paragraph 19 that the practice not to reproduce *in extenso* statements made in a Main Committee be maintained for the fifty-second session?

I see no objection.

It was so decided.

The President: Section II.H concerns concluding statements in the General Assembly and the Main Committees.

I take it that the General Assembly takes note of this section?

It was so decided.

The President: Section II.I concerns resolutions.

May I take it that the General Assembly takes note of the provisions contained in paragraphs 21 to 25?

It was so decided.

The President: Section II.J concerns documentation.

May I take it that the General Assembly takes note of the provision relating to reports of the Secretary-General or subsidiary organs contained in paragraph 26?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 27, the General Committee also draws the attention of the General Assembly to paragraph 6 of its resolution 48/264 and to paragraph 4 of its resolution 50/206 C, which emphasize that documentation should be available in accordance with the six-week rule for the distribution of documents simultaneously in each of the six official languages of the United Nations.

May I take it that the Assembly takes note of paragraph 27?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 28, the General Committee took note of the fact that, as announced earlier, a target has been set for an early reduction in the documentation produced by the Secretariat and that the volume of pre-session documentation for the fifty-second session is projected at a level slightly below that of previous comparable years.

In this connection, I urge members of the Assembly to make a special effort during this session, taking into consideration especially the provisions of resolution 51/241 on the strengthening of the United Nations system, to exercise restraint in making proposals requesting new reports of the Secretary-General and to consider integrating, biennializing or triennializing the presentation of reports.

Section II.K refers to questions relating to the programme budget. May I take it that the General Assembly takes note of the provisions contained in paragraphs 29 and 30?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 31, which concerns sub-paragraph 13 (d) of decision 34/401, the General Committee draws the Assembly's attention to the observations by the Secretary-General that the preparation of a statement of programme budget implications by the Secretary-General may take a few days. In addition, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee need adequate time to review the programme budget implications of a draft resolution before the draft resolution can be acted on by the Assembly.

The Secretary-General thus considers it desirable that Member States submit proposals sufficiently in advance to avoid the cancellation of meetings and the postponement of consideration of items.

May I take it that the Assembly takes notes of the observations of the Secretary-General set out in paragraph 31?

It was so decided.

The President: Section II.L concerns observances and commemorative meetings. We turn first to paragraph 32. The General Committee recommends that, allowing for the necessary flexibility and with the exception of the anniversary of the United Nations, the General Assembly should adopt the suggested format for commemorative meetings, including limiting each statement to 15 minutes.

May I take it that the Assembly approves the recommendations contained in paragraph 32?

It was so decided.

The President: May I take it that the Assembly also approves the recommendation contained in paragraph 33 regarding the scheduling of observances and commemorative meetings?

It was so decided.

The President: I now invite the General Assembly to turn to section II.M, which refers to special conferences. May I take it that the Assembly approves the recommendations referred to in paragraphs 34 and 35?

It was so decided.

The President: In section II.N, concerning meetings of subsidiary organs, the General Committee recommends to the General Assembly, on the strict understanding that meetings would have to be accommodated within available facilities and services, that the subsidiary organs referred to in paragraph 36 be authorized to meet during the main part of the fifty-second session.

May I take it that the General Assembly approves that recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to section III, which contains observations on the organization of future sessions of the General Assembly. In paragraph 38, the General Committee draws the attention of the General Assembly to resolution 51/241, entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations system", adopted by the General Assembly on 31 July 1997 and to be implemented as of 1 January 1998. The attention of the General Assembly is drawn especially to section VI of the annex to the resolution, concerning the timing of the plenary meetings of the General Assembly.

May I take it that the General Assembly takes note of paragraph 38?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to section IV of the report of the General Committee, relating to the adoption of the agenda. This section starts with paragraph 39.

I would first recall rule 23 of the rules of procedure, which provides that:

"Debate on the inclusion of an item in the agenda, when that item has been recommended for inclusion by the General Committee, shall be limited to three speakers in favour of, and three against, the inclusion."

I should like to stress that at this time we are not discussing the substance of any item.

With regard to paragraph 40, may I consider that it is the wish of the Assembly to direct its Main Committees to review their agendas with a view to streamlining their programmes of work, as suggested in that paragraph?

It was so decided.

The President: Again, may I urge members of the Assembly to give careful thought to the suggestion by the Secretary-General, taking into account especially paragraph 24 of the annex to resolution 51/241, to consider deferring to a later session items for which decisions and action are not required at the present session.

In paragraph 41, the General Committee recommends that the consideration of item 94 of the draft agenda, "Question of the Malagasy islands of Glorieuses, Juan de Nova, Europa and Bassas da India", should be deferred to the fifty-third session and that the item should be included in the provisional agenda of that session.

May I take it that the Assembly approves that recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 42, the General Committee recommends that the consideration of item 95 of the draft agenda, "Question of East Timor", should be deferred to the fifty-third session and that the item should be included in the provisional agenda of that session.

May I take it that the Assembly approves that recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In respect of paragraph 43, in connection with item 157, "Draft guiding principles for international negotiations", the General Committee recommends its inclusion as a sub-item of item 148 of the draft agenda, "United Nations Decade of International Law".

May I take it that the Assembly approves that recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In respect of paragraph 44, in connection with item 158, "Amendment to article 13 of the statute of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal", the General Committee recommends its inclusion in the agenda of the current session.

May I take it that the Assembly approves that recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In respect of paragraph 45, the General Committee decided not to recommend the inclusion of item 159, "Need to review General Assembly resolution 2758 (XXVI) of 25 October 1971 owing to the fundamental change in the international situation and to the coexistence of two Governments across the Taiwan Strait".

In respect of paragraph 46, in connection with item 160 "Towards a culture of peace", the General Committee recommends its inclusion in the agenda of the current session.

May I take it that the Assembly approves that recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In respect of paragraph 47, in connection with item 162, "Observer status for the Andean Community in the General Assembly", the General Committee recommends its inclusion in the agenda of the current session.

May I take it that the Assembly approves that recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to the agenda which the General Committee recommends for adoption by the General Assembly.

In accordance with past practice, we shall follow the numbering given in paragraph 48 of the General Committee's report (A/52/250), and, where it seems appropriate, we shall consider items in groups. I should like to remind members once again that at present we are not discussing the substance of any item, except when such discussion can assist the Assembly in deciding whether or not to include an item in the agenda.

Items 1 to 6 have already been dealt with.

We now turn to items 7 to 47. May I remind members that we are dealing only with the question of the inclusion of the items.

May I take it that these items are included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: May I take it that items 48 to 61 are included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: I now invite members to turn to items 62 to 83 relating to disarmament. May I take it that these items are included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: Now we turn to items 84 to 94. May I take it that these items are included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: Next, we come to items 95 to 101 relating to international economic issues. May I take it that these items are included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: Items 102 to 112 relate to social and humanitarian questions. Are these items also to be included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: Next, may I take it that items 113 to 143 dealing with administrative and financial questions are included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: We now turn to items 144 to 152. If there is no objection, I shall take it that these items are included in the agenda.

It was so decided.

The President: Next we turn to items 153 and 154. May I take it that these items are included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to item 155, entitled "Amendment to article 13 of the statute of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal". May I take it that this item is included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: Next, we turn to item 156, entitled "Towards a culture of peace". May I take it that the Assembly recommends the inclusion of this item?

It was so decided.

The President: The next item, item 157, is entitled "United Nations reform: measures and proposals". May I take it that the General Assembly recommends the inclusion of this item?

It was so decided.

The President: The last item for inclusion is item 158, entitled "Observer status for the Andean Community in the General Assembly". May I take it that the General Assembly recommends the inclusion of this item?

It was so decided.

The President: We now turn to section V of the report of the General Committee on allocation of items.

May I take it that the General Assembly takes note of the provisions contained in paragraph 49?

It was so decided.

The President: We shall now turn to the recommendations contained in paragraph 50. We shall take up the recommendations one by one.

Before we proceed, may I remind members that the item numbers refer to the agenda in paragraph 48 of the report before us, namely, document A/52/250.

We turn first to the recommendation in paragraph 50 (a)(i), which concerns item 10. May I take it that the General Assembly approves that recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to the recommendation in paragraph 50 (a) (ii) relating to item 18. May I take it that the General Assembly adopts that recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: Next, we turn to the recommendation in paragraph 50 (a) (iii) concerning item 48. May I take it

that the General Assembly approves that recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In connection with paragraph 50 (a) (iv), relating to item 61, the General Committee recommends that the General Assembly allocate the item at an appropriate time during the session. May I take it that the General Assembly approves the recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to paragraph 50 (a) (v) relating to item 156, entitled "Towards a culture of peace". May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to consider the item directly in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

The President: We next turn to paragraph 50 (a)(vi) relating to item 158, entitled "Observer status for the Andean Community in the General Assembly". May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to consider the item directly in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

The President: We now turn to the recommendation in paragraph 50 (b), relating to item 71, entitled "General and complete disarmament". May I take it that the General Assembly approves this recommendation pertaining to item 71?

It was so decided.

The President: Next, we turn to the recommendation in paragraph 50 (c) relating to item 105, entitled "Advancement of Women". May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: Next, we turn to the recommendation in paragraph 50 (d) relating to item 118, entitled "Joint Inspection Unit".

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly that the item should be allocated to the Fifth Committee, on the understanding that the reports of the Joint Inspection

Unit dealing with subject-matters assigned to other Main Committees would be referred also to those Committees?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to the recommendation contained in paragraph 50 (e) (i) relating to item 146 (c), entitled “Draft guiding principles for international negotiations”. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly that the item should be allocated to the Sixth Committee as a sub-item of item 146?

It was so decided.

The President: We next turn to paragraph 50 (e)(ii) relating to item 155, entitled, “Amendment to article 13 of the statute of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal”. May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to allocate the item to the Sixth Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: We shall now turn to paragraph 51 of the report of the General Committee.

Mr. Kamal (Pakistan): It is our understanding that, in allocating item 62 to the plenary, we are in no way prejudging the mechanism to be set up subsequently for the proper and detailed consideration of the issue. This can be either the plenary itself, a committee of the whole, a working group or the relevant Main Committees. It is also our understanding that the plenary itself will decide on the issue of the mechanism after the general debate.

The President: I would like to take this opportunity to inform the General Assembly that the President is now undertaking very extensive consultations, since this issue was raised in the meeting of the General Committee, to determine the mechanism of the consideration of the Secretary-General’s report on reform of the United Nations. Certainly, the Assembly in plenary meeting will make a decision on the format of the mechanism on this issue.

I now invite members to turn to the list of items recommended by the General Committee for consideration in plenary meeting.

Taking into account the decisions just adopted, may I consider that the General Assembly approves the allocation of the items listed in paragraph 51 of the report of the General Committee for consideration directly in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

I give the floor to the representative of the United States.

Mr. Rosenstock (United States of America): We wish to associate ourselves with your comments, Mr. President, concerning the treatment of item 62, which has, of course, been referred to plenary meeting for future consideration. That was a decision taken by the General Assembly at this session.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of France.

Mr. Legal (France) (*interpretation from French*): My comments are not related to the issue raised by the two previous speakers, but to the fact that, with regard to paragraph 51 of the version of the text from which I am working, the text distributed to us is incomplete. It contains the allocation of items for plenary meetings, First Committee and Fourth Committee, but it does not contain the text of the allocation of items to the Second, Third, Fifth or Sixth Committees.

In principle, in such a case as this my delegation would not be in a position to associate itself with the adoption of the recommendations proposed to us in the report of the General Committee. We are therefore in a difficult position. However, the Secretariat has apologized to us and has indicated that the corrected version of the text — at least, the French version — will be given to us without delay.

Having expressed my reservations, and given the assurances provided to us, I do not want to create problems for the adoption of the recommendations in paragraph 51 in this exceptional case. I understand that the staff of the Secretariat make a great effort, working carefully and to the best of their abilities to provide us with good documentation, so I do not want to complicate their lives. However, I believe that this incident is revealing of the fact that the staff of the General Assembly and of the documentation and language services are working under excessive pressure. This type of incident shows that there are limits to the pressure that one can impose on staff. I believe that our friends in the Secretariat are working hard; perhaps they are working too hard, and this is the result of such overwork.

I do not want to aggravate matters for them — if I may be permitted to use that expression — so I will let

this pass. But I trust that the definitive corrected version will be given to us as soon as possible. We have been given the text in English, but of course the English text cannot suffice.

The President: I should like to assure the representative of France that the Secretariat and the presidency will undertake all necessary measures to have all documents issued in all the official languages of the Organization promptly and on time. As the Assembly is well aware, this bulky document was approved only yesterday by the General Committee, and I convened the plenary meeting at 11 o'clock instead of at 10 o'clock, as originally scheduled, to provide an opportunity for the documentation and other services of the Secretariat to issue all the documents. However, that has not been the case. I can assure delegations that the Secretariat and I will do our best to have documents issued on time. I am grateful to the distinguished representative of France for his cooperation and understanding of the situation.

I now give the floor to the representative of Swaziland.

Mr. Dlamini (Swaziland): I wish to echo the spirit of understanding that you, Mr. President, expressed towards the delegation of France, which has received by mistake a document that is not in its language, one of the official languages of the United Nations. I am sure that in the near future the United Nations will have to reconsider the question of languages very carefully, especially given the fact that now there are so many Members of this body whose languages are not regarded as languages because they are not among the six that are used. I, for instance, would like to speak my language, siSwati, here, in order to express myself better in debates. However, we appreciate the understanding offered to the delegation of France.

In addition, I wish to make the observation that a document of this significance should in future be made ready before we come here to adopt the recommendations in the report. In my view, this would allow delegations to peruse the document, see the mistakes and inadvertent omissions and also, perhaps, see where we could make the necessary changes so that the document could be adopted holistically. But when we receive the document only when we arrive here it gives us very little time to understand fully the proposals that we are to adopt. The mistake observed by France, for instance, could have been observed yesterday instead of today.

The President: Let us now turn to the allocation of agenda items to the Main Committees. We come first to the list of items which the General Committee has recommended for allocation to the First Committee.

Taking into account the decisions just adopted, may I take it that the General Assembly approves the allocation of the items proposed for the First Committee in paragraph 51 of the report of the General Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to the list of items which the General Committee recommends for allocation to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee).

Taking into account the decisions just adopted, may I consider that the General Assembly approves the allocation of items proposed for the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) in paragraph 51 of the report of the General Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: We come now to the list of items which the General Committee has recommended for allocation to the Second Committee.

Taking into account the decisions just adopted, may I consider that the General Assembly approves the allocation of items proposed for the Second Committee in paragraph 51 of the report of the General Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to the list of items which the General Committee recommends for allocation to the Third Committee.

Taking into account the decisions just adopted, may I take it that the General Assembly approves the allocation of items to the Third Committee as proposed in paragraph 51 of the report of the General Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: Next, we come to the list of items which the General Committee recommends for allocation to the Fifth Committee.

Taking into account the decisions just adopted, may I take it that the General Assembly approves the allocation of items to the Fifth Committee as proposed in paragraph 51 of the report of the General Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: Lastly, we come to the list of items which the General Committee recommends for allocation to the Sixth Committee.

Taking into account the decisions just adopted, may I take it that the General Assembly approves the allocation of items proposed to the Sixth Committee in paragraph 51 of the report of the General Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of the first report of the General Committee.

I wish to thank all the members of the Assembly for their cooperation. Each Main Committee will receive the list of agenda items allocated to it so that it may begin its work as soon as possible, in accordance with rule 99 of the rules of procedure.

Before we adjourn, I wish to recall and underline that all meetings must start punctually, at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. Kindly note that all Main Committees should complete their work by 28 November, and the plenary should recess by 16 December. I hope the Main Committees will continue with the effort they demonstrated in the fifty-first session in concluding their work on time. I personally intend to ensure that we all keep to our commitment taken today.

This undertaking also applies to the Secretariat, which must ensure that all documentation in all languages is in time for meetings to proceed without any delay.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.