



**REPORT  
OF THE  
SPECIAL COMMITTEE  
ON  
METHODS AND PROCEDURES  
OF THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**OFFICIAL RECORDS: FOURTH SESSION**

**SUPPLEMENT No. 12 (A/937)**

**LAKE SUCCESS, NEW YORK, 1949**

UNITED NATIONS

**REPORT**  
**OF THE**  
**SPECIAL COMMITTEE**  
**ON**  
**METHODS AND PROCEDURES**  
**OF THE**  
**GENERAL ASSEMBLY**



**GENERAL ASSEMBLY**  
**OFFICIAL RECORDS: FOURTH SESSION**  
**SUPPLEMENT NO. 12 (A/937)**

LAKE SUCCESS, NEW YORK

1949

All United Nations documents are designated by symbols, i.e., capital letters combined with figures. Mention of such a symbol indicates a reference to a United Nations document.

A/937

12 August 1949

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL DATED 12 AUGUST 1949 FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL .....	1
Report of the Special Committee on Methods and Procedures of the General Assembly .....	2
I. INTRODUCTION	
Paragraphs 1-4 .....	2
II. PRESENT RULES OF PROCEDURE AND DURATION OF SESSIONS	
Paragraphs 5-8 .....	3
III. RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE AGENDA	
Paragraph 9: Target date for the closing of the session (Contains recommendation for new rule 1(a)) .....	3
Paragraph 10: Functions of the General Committee in connection with the agenda (Contains recommendations for changes in rule 35) .....	4
Paragraph 11: Inclusion of additional items (Contains recommendation for revised rule 14 and new rule 19(a)) .....	4
Paragraph 12: Reference of items to other organs of the United Nations without preliminary debate .....	5
Paragraphs 13 and 14: Consideration of international conventions .....	5
Paragraph 15: Question of the establishment of an agenda committee .....	6
Paragraph 16: Proposals for a nominations committee .....	6
Paragraph 17: Explanatory memoranda (Contains recommendation for new rule 11(a)) .....	6
IV. RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO THE ORGANIZATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY SESSIONS	
Paragraph 18: Responsibilities of the General Committee for the progress of work—convening of General Committee meetings (Contains recommendation for new rule 35(a)) .....	6
Paragraph 19: Participation of the Chairman of an <i>ad hoc</i> committee (Contains recommendation for a new rule 34(a)) .....	7
Paragraph 20: Suggestion that the General Committee meet simultaneously with plenary or Main Committees and that some of Main Committees start their work before the end of the general debate .....	7
Paragraph 21: Committee priorities (Contains a recommendation for a new rule 89(a)) .....	7
Paragraph 22: Allocation of agenda items to Main Committees .....	7
Paragraph 23: Consideration of certain questions directly in plenary meeting without reference to a Main Committee .....	7
Paragraph 24: Repetition of debate .....	8
Paragraph 25: Debates in the General Committee on the agenda (Contains recommendations for addition of a sentence to rule 35 and for a new rule 35(a)) .....	8
Paragraph 26: Limitation of debate in plenary meeting on inclusion of items in the agenda (Contains recommendation for new rule 19(a)) .....	8
Paragraph 27: Discussion of Main Committee reports in plenary meeting (Contains recommendation for amendment to rule 59) .....	9
V. RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO THE CONDUCT OF DEBATES IN PLENARY MEETINGS AND IN COMMITTEES	
Paragraph 28: Punctuality and quorum (Contains recommendation for amendment to rule 98) .....	9
Paragraph 29: Mechanical and technical devices (See Annex II) .....	9

	<i>Page</i>
<i>Paragraph 30: Time-limit on speeches on substance (Contains recommendations for amendments to rules 65 and 103)</i> .....	10
<i>Paragraph 31: Limitation of the time allowed to representatives speaking on procedural questions (Contains recommendations for amendments to rules 67 and 105, 68 and 106, 69 and 107)</i> .....	10
<i>Paragraph 32: Explanation of votes (Contains recommendations for supplementing rules 80 and 117)</i> .....	10
<i>Paragraph 33: Division of proposals (Contains recommendations for amendments to rules 81 and 118)</i> .....	10
<i>Paragraph 34: Voting on amendments on parts of proposals relating to important questions</i> .....	11
<i>Paragraph 35: Rules 72 and 110 on motions on competence</i> .....	11
<i>Paragraph 36: Suspension of the application of the rules of procedure</i> ..	11
<i>Paragraph 37: Points of order (Contains recommendations for amendments to rule 64 and 102)</i> .....	11
<i>Paragraph 38: Functions of presiding officers (Contains recommendations for additions to rules 31 and 97)</i> .....	11
<i>Paragraph 39: Role of presiding officers</i> .....	11
 VI. SECRETARY-GENERAL'S PROPOSAL FOR AN INTERVAL OF PRAYER OR MEDITATION IN MEETINGS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY	
<i>Paragraph 40: (Contains recommendation for new rule 56(a))</i> .....	12
 VII. STATEMENTS OF VIEWS OF INDIVIDUAL DELEGATIONS	
<i>Paragraphs 41-52: Minority views of the delegation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics</i> .....	12
 ANNEX I. Proposals submitted to the Special Committee .....	14
 ANNEX II. Mechanical and technical devices: Memorandum by the Secretary-General .....	21

**LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL DATED 12 AUGUST 1949 FROM THE CHAIRMAN  
OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

I have the honour to communicate to you herewith, for circulation to Members, the report of the Special Committee on Methods and Procedures, for consideration at the fourth regular session of the General Assembly. The Special Committee was established by resolution 271 (III) adopted by the General Assembly on 20 April 1949.

In conformity with its terms of reference, the Special Committee carefully considered methods and procedures which would enable the General Assembly and its committees to discharge their functions more effectively and expeditiously. As the report indicates, the Special Committee does not consider that the present length of General Assembly sessions can be ascribed primarily to the rules of procedure. It is due, above all, to the number and complexity of the questions submitted to the Assembly and to the political problems raised by these questions. Nevertheless, the Special Committee thinks that the present methods and procedures of the Assembly might be usefully improved if the Assembly accepted the amendments to the rules of procedure proposed by the Special Committee and if it endorsed the interpretations and opinions suggested by the Special Committee.

The Special Committee realizes that, if the objectives set by the General Assembly are to be fully attained, the study of the problems which the

Assembly entrusted to it for consideration should be pursued, and that the General Assembly itself should continue to give its constant attention to the factors affecting the duration of its sessions. As its activities develop, and by making use of the experience gained during its sessions, the Assembly may in due course revise and perfect its working methods. The Special Committee anticipates that the Secretary-General, for his part, will not fail to carry out appropriate studies and subsequently submit proposals to the Assembly.

I have been requested by the Special Committee to point out that it would be of advantage if the General Assembly agreed to consider the Special Committee's report early in its proceedings, so that such recommendations contained in the report as the General Assembly may see fit to adopt may become operative at the earliest possible moment and in this way help to shorten the length of the fourth session.

I take this opportunity of expressing the feelings of my colleagues in paying tribute to the valuable assistance the Special Committee has received from the members of the Secretariat who assisted it in its work.

*(Signed) Sven GRAFSTROM*  
*Chairman of the Special Committee on*  
*Methods and Procedures of the General Assembly*

# REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON METHODS AND PROCEDURES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

## I. INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 271 (III) of 29 April 1949, the General Assembly expressed its concern at the increasing length of General Assembly sessions and at the growing tendency towards protracted debates in its plenary meetings and committees, and established a Special Committee consisting of the representatives of fifteen Members. The Special Committee was instructed to:

(a) Consider methods and procedures which would enable the General Assembly and its committees to discharge their functions more effectively and expeditiously;

(b) Submit, if possible, a preliminary report to the General Assembly during the second part of its third session;

(c) Transmit a report to the Secretary-General, not later than 15 August 1949, for circulation to Members for consideration at the fourth regular session of the General Assembly.

The Secretary-General was invited to collaborate closely with the Special Committee in its work.

2. The Members appointed by the General Assembly were represented as follows during the Special Committee's work:

*Belgium*: Mr. A. Wendelen.

*Brazil*: Mr. R. de Oliveira Campos and Mr. C. S. de Ouro Preto.

*Canada*: Mr. H. H. Carter and Mr. G. K. Grande.

*China*: Mr. H. C. Kiang and Mr. A. Szu-tu.

*Czechoslovakia*: Mr. V. Houdek.

*Egypt*: Mr. O. Loutfi and Mr. A. M. El-Messiri.

*France*: Mr. P. Ordonneau and Mr. F. de Rose.

*India*: Mr. G. Menon and Mr. S. Dharman.

*Iran*: Mr. N. Entezam and Mr. K. Khosrovani.

*Mexico*: Mr. L. Padilla Nervo.

*Sweden*: Mr. S. Grafström.

*Union of Soviet Socialist Republics*: Mr. A. Sol-datov.

*United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*: Sir Alexander Cadogan and Mr. J. E. S. Fawcett.

*United States of America*: Mr. J. Hyde and Mr. B. H. Brown.

*Uruguay*: Mr. E. Rodríguez Fabregat.

Mr. Entezam (Iran) was elected Chairman. Mr. Houdek (Czechoslovakia) was elected Vice-Chairman, and Mr. Grafström (Sweden) was elected Rapporteur. After the departure of Mr. Entezam, Mr. Grafström was elected Chairman by application of rule 96 of the rules of procedure,

and combined the functions of Chairman with those of Rapporteur.

3. During its second meeting, held on 10 May 1949, the Special Committee decided, on the proposal of its Bureau, that because its members were obliged to attend meetings of other committees it would be unable to submit a preliminary report to the General Assembly before the end of the second part of the third session.

4. On 3 May 1949, the delegations of Denmark, Norway and Sweden transmitted new proposals to the Secretary-General (A/825/Add.1), supplementary to those contained in the letter dated 29 March 1949 sent by the delegations of the three Scandinavian countries to the Secretary-General (A/825). On 2 May 1949, the Chairman of the delegation of the Union of South Africa to the third regular session of the General Assembly transmitted his delegation's proposals to the Secretary-General (A/AC.30/1).

In pursuance of a suggestion in the report of the *Ad Hoc* Political Committee of the General Assembly (A/839), the Special Committee invited, through the Secretary-General, all States Members of the Organization to submit to it, before 15 June 1949, any proposals they wished to make on methods and procedures which would enable the General Assembly and its Committees to discharge their functions more effectively and expeditiously.

Several Governments responded to this invitation.

On 19 May 1949, the permanent delegation of Greece submitted a series of suggestions (A/AC.30/2). A *note verbale* (A/AC.30/8), from the permanent delegation of New Zealand, dated 27 June 1949, and a *note verbale* (A/AC.30/9) from the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Commonwealth Relations of Pakistan, dated 24 June 1949, both subsequent to the final date fixed by the Special Committee, were transmitted to the Rapporteur, who took into account the proposals they contained in preparing his report.

The Special Committee informed Member States not represented on it that it would be prepared to hear any oral explanations they might wish to make with regard to their written proposals. Representatives of the Union of South Africa and Norway responded to this invitation and took part in the Special Committee's discussion of certain proposals of which their delegations were the authors.

Among the written proposals submitted to the Special Committee by its members should be mentioned those of the United Kingdom (A/AC.30/3 and A/AC.30/10), China (A/AC.30/5), Canada (A/AC.30/7) and the United States of America (A/AC.30/11 and A/AC.30/12).

In a letter dated 22 June 1949 (A/AC.30/6), the Secretary-General presented a proposal to the Special Committee to the effect that the General Assembly should open its plenary meetings with one minute devoted to prayer or meditation.

At its ninth meeting the Special Committee

decided to annex to its report to the General Assembly the written proposals it had received from various delegations and from the Secretary-General. The communications containing these proposals appear in annex I to the present document.

## II. PRESENT RULES OF PROCEDURE AND DURATION OF SESSIONS

5. During twenty-three meetings held in June, July and August 1949, the Special Committee studied carefully the various factors affecting the duration of the General Assembly. It dealt successively with questions concerning the establishment of the agenda of sessions, the internal organization of the Assembly, the means of shortening debates in plenary meetings and committees and the clarification of rules of procedure, the application of which has given rise to difficulties in the past, thereby causing prolonged procedural debates. The conclusions which the Special Committee has the honour to bring to the General Assembly's attention in the following paragraphs consist of proposed amendments to the rules of procedure, interpretations of certain rules at present in force, and recommendations and advice to representatives to the General Assembly, especially those who are called upon as Chairmen to conduct debates in plenary meetings and committees.

6. In submitting its proposals, the Special Committee wishes to state that throughout its work its members have constantly had in mind the essential role entrusted to the General Assembly under the Charter, and the prestige and high authority that should belong to the only principal organ of the United Nations on which are represented on an equal footing all the Members of the Organization.

The Special Committee has been careful that none of its proposals should have the effect of diminishing the competence or functions of the General Assembly, or in any way hindering the natural development of that vital organ of the United Nations. The Special Committee examined only those proposals designed to save time, which, in the opinion of its members, took these fundamental principles into consideration.

The Special Committee believes that the adoption of its recommendations will fully safeguard the rights possessed by Members of the United Nations—whether on a given question they belong to the majority or the minority—to draw the General Assembly's attention to problems within its competence, to express their views and to participate fully in the adoption of resolutions on matters of which the General Assembly has been seized. The sole purpose of the Special Committee's recommendations is to adapt the organization and procedures of the General Assembly to its

increasing responsibilities, as the Special Committee believes that such adaptation is indispensable in order to enable the Assembly to discharge its functions more effectively and expeditiously.

In this regard, it seemed particularly important to the Special Committee that General Assembly sessions should be planned in such a way as to facilitate the participation, as representatives of Member States, of persons holding the highest Government posts or representing the most diverse fields of national activity, whose normal functions prevent them from remaining at United Nations Headquarters for extensive periods.<sup>1</sup>

7. The Special Committee does not consider that the present length of General Assembly sessions can be ascribed primarily to the rules of procedure. It is due, above all, to the number and complexity of the questions submitted to the Assembly and to the political problems raised by these questions. Nevertheless, the Special Committee thinks that the present methods and procedures of the Assembly might be usefully improved if the Assembly accepted the amendments to the rules of procedure proposed by the Special Committee and if it endorsed the interpretations and opinions suggested by the Special Committee.<sup>1</sup>

8. The Special Committee is not recommending substantial modifications to the rules of procedure. It considers that, on the whole, the present rules of procedure, based as they are on the experience of other international organizations and on the relatively recent work of the Preparatory Commission of the United Nations and of several committees of the General Assembly, represent both in letter and in spirit, an adequate instrument, which can enable the General Assembly to carry out its functions effectively. Thus, the Special Committee's first conclusion is that the General Assembly's work might be considerably accelerated if the present rules of procedure were more faithfully observed, if all their potentialities were better known to the Chairmen and members, if some of the rules were clarified, if Chairmen performed their functions more boldly and if members offered them their full co-operation and goodwill in ensuring that the rules of procedure receive their normal application.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The paragraph was adopted by the Special Committee by 12 votes to 1.

## III. RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE AGENDA

9. In the light of the preceding considerations, the Special Committee recommends that the General Assembly should, on the proposal of the General Committee, fix at the beginning of each session the date by which it would endeavour to complete its work.

The Special Committee did not wish to go any further in this direction or to adopt proposals which would limit the duration of the session in a more rigid manner, although it was pointed out in the course of its debates that to enable Governments to ensure adequate representation, sessions



of the General Assembly should not exceed eight weeks.

The Special Committee thought that it would be undesirable to recommend too strict a rule. The probable duration of each session can only be determined, in present circumstances, on the basis of the number and nature of the questions submitted to the Assembly and of an estimate of the length of the debates which they may occasion. The Special Committee's proposal tends thus to render permanent and to strengthen the practice, which has developed during the last two sessions, of fixing a closing date which would represent a target for the Assembly.

The General Assembly's decision on the closing date of the session might be taken either when the agenda is adopted, if the General Committee and the General Assembly consider that they have sufficient information at the time, or soon after the beginning of the session, when the general debate and the initial stages of the Committee's work have provided indications permitting a decision on the closing date with better knowledge of the facts.

The Special Committee therefore proposes to add a rule 1 (a) to the rules of procedure, to be drafted as follows:

#### *Rule 1 (a)<sup>2</sup>*

##### *Duration of session*

*On the recommendation of the General Committee, the General Assembly shall, at the beginning of each session, fix a target date for the closing of the session.*

A consequential amendment to rule 35 would be required. The following sentence would be added:<sup>3</sup>

*The General Committee shall make recommendations to the General Assembly concerning the closing date of the session.<sup>4</sup>*

10. The Special Committee considers that, in order to maintain the duration of sessions within normal limits, it is important that the provisional agenda of the General Assembly (provided for in rules 11 and 12), the supplementary list (rule 13) and requests for the inclusion of additional items (rule 14) should be scrutinized with greater care than in the past. The General Committee, in the first place, and the General Assembly itself, should examine all requests for inclusion in the agenda, not only with special attention to the importance of these questions in relation to the achievement of the purposes of the United Nations, but also in relation to the agenda as a whole and the time available for the session.

The Special Committee, therefore, deems it important to reaffirm the General Assembly's right to exclude certain questions from the agenda and also its right, under rule 14, to delete questions previously included. Such action by the General Assembly amounts, in fact, to postponement, since countries which have proposed an item for the Assembly's consideration have the right, in the event of their request being rejected, to propose its inclusion in the provisional agenda of the next

session. Moreover, under rule 12, the General Assembly may itself decide to include in the provisional agenda of a future session any item that it has excluded or deleted from its agenda.

The Special Committee considers that it would be advisable to render the General Committee's rights and responsibilities more explicit by specifying its right to recommend to the General Assembly not to include a question in the agenda or to postpone its consideration. It, therefore, proposes the following wording for the first part of rule 35 (a sentence has been added concerning the General Committee's recommendations on the closing date of the session):

#### *Rule 35*

##### *Functions*

The General Committee shall, at the beginning of each session, consider the provisional agenda, together with the supplementary list, and shall make *recommendations to the General Assembly with regard to each item proposed, concerning its inclusion in the agenda, the rejection of the request for inclusion, or the inclusion of the item in the provisional agenda of a future session. It shall, in the same manner, examine requests for the inclusion of additional items in the agenda, and shall make recommendations thereon to the General Assembly. The General Committee shall make recommendations to the General Assembly concerning the closing date of the session. It shall assist the President . . .*<sup>5, 6</sup>

11. The Special Committee is of the opinion that the important and urgent character of additional items referred to in rule 14 should be determined with care. It believes that the inclusion of items proposed shortly before or during the session should constitute exceptions, not only because last-minute proposals may result in overloading the agenda, but also because delegations to the General Assembly find it very difficult to prepare for the examination of such proposals at short notice and to obtain adequate instructions from their Governments. The Special Committee proposes, therefore, that the inclusion of additional items in the agenda of a regular session should be decided by a two-thirds majority of the Members present and voting.

The Special Committee also proposes a drafting change, in order to make it clear that the provisions of rule 14 apply to all additional items, whether proposed during the session, or during the thirty-day period which precedes the opening of the session. The Special Committee is further of the opinion that the General Assembly's power to amend or delete agenda items might be mentioned in a separate rule which would apply to both regular and special sessions. The resulting two rules would be worded as follows:

#### *Rule 14*

##### *Additional items*

*Additional items of an important and urgent character, proposed for inclusion in the agenda less than thirty days before the opening of a regular session or during a regular session, may be placed on the agenda, if the General Assembly so decides by a majority of two-thirds of the Mem-*

<sup>2</sup>Additions to the existing text of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly have been italicized throughout this report.

<sup>3</sup>See also proposed new text of rule 35 in paragraph 10.

<sup>4</sup>The paragraph was adopted by 12 votes to 1.

<sup>5</sup>See also paragraph 25.

<sup>6</sup>The paragraph was adopted by 10 votes to 3.

bers present and voting. *No additional item may be considered until seven days have elapsed since it was placed on the agenda*, unless the General Assembly, by a two-thirds majority of the Members present and voting, decides otherwise, and until a committee has reported upon the question concerned.

#### Rule 19 (a)

##### *Amendments and deletions of items*

*Items on the agenda may be amended or deleted by the General Assembly by a majority of the Members present and voting.*<sup>7</sup>

12. The Special Committee also wishes to draw the General Assembly's attention to its power to decide, at the beginning of or during the session, to refer certain items, without preliminary debate, to other organs of the United Nations, or to the author of a proposal for inclusion of an item, for further information or documentation. Such a decision would have the advantage of lightening the agenda by avoiding the discussion of questions which are not very urgent and which could usefully be studied in detail by other organs, such as one of the existing subsidiary organs of the General Assembly, an *ad hoc* committee, one of the Councils, a specialized agency, or the Secretary-General. It was emphasized, in this connexion, that questions of an exclusively economic, social or cultural nature should not as a rule be submitted to the General Assembly until they had been considered by the Economic and Social Council.

The organs to which the items would be referred might report to a future session of the General Assembly, which would thus have the advantage of dealing with questions which had been subjected beforehand to a thorough study. In this regard the Special Committee's attention was drawn to the right of the Economic and Social Council and of the Trusteeship Council to make direct recommendations to Members of the United Nations. The General Assembly would therefore have to determine in each case if it wishes reports to be submitted to it on these questions for its final approval, or if it would prefer to invite those organs to make direct recommendations to Members.<sup>8</sup>

13. The Special Committee found that in the past some of the Main Committees of the General Assembly had devoted a particularly large number of meetings to the detailed consideration, article by article, of texts of international conventions. This was even the case where the text of a convention had been drawn up by an international conference on which all Member States had been represented. It was pointed out in this connexion that experience had shown that a Main Committee, by the very fact of its size, was not particularly fitted to draft conventions, and that when it was entrusted with the detailed study of conventions, it often did not have time to deal satisfactorily with the other questions for which it was responsible.

The Special Committee recognizes the importance of the sponsorship of conventions by the General Assembly. It believes that the authority

of the General Assembly and the powerful influence its debates have on public opinion should, in many cases, be used for the benefit of international legislation by means of conventions. It therefore favours the retention by the General Assembly of the necessary freedom of action.

The Special Committee therefore confines itself to recommending that, when conventions have been negotiated by international conferences in which all the Members of the United Nations have been invited to take part, and on which they have been represented, not only by experts acting in a personal capacity but by representatives of Governments, and when these conventions are subsequently submitted to the General Assembly for consideration, the Assembly should not undertake a further detailed examination, but should limit itself to discussing them in a broad manner and to giving its general views on the instruments submitted to it. After such a debate, the General Assembly could, if desirable, adopt the conclusions reached by the conferences and recommend to Members the acceptance or ratification of such conventions.

This procedure might be applied in particular to conventions submitted to the General Assembly as a result of conferences of all Member States convened by the Economic and Social Council under Article 62, paragraph 4 of the Charter.<sup>9</sup>

14. Furthermore, when it is proposed that the General Assembly should consider conventions prepared by groups of experts not acting as governmental representatives, or by conferences in which all Members of the United Nations have not been invited to take part, it would be advisable for the General Committee and the General Assembly to determine whether one of the Main Committees, especially the Legal Committee, would have enough time during the session to examine these conventions in detail, or whether it would be possible to set up an *ad hoc* committee to undertake this study during the session.<sup>10</sup>

If this is not possible, the Special Committee recommends that the General Assembly should decide, after or without a general debate on the fundamental principles of the proposed convention, that an *ad hoc* committee should be established to meet between sessions. Alternatively, the General Assembly might decide to convene a conference of plenipotentiaries between two of its own sessions, to study, negotiate, draft, and possibly sign, the convention. The conference of plenipotentiaries might be empowered by the General Assembly to transmit the instruments directly to Governments for acceptance or ratification. In this case too, the General Assembly might, at a subsequent session, express its general opinion on the convention resulting from the conference, and might recommend to Members its acceptance or ratification.

With regard to the drafting of legal texts, the Special Committee strongly recommends that small drafting committees should be resorted to whenever possible.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup>The paragraph was adopted by 10 votes to 1, with 1 abstention.

<sup>10</sup>In this connexion, the Special Committee was informed that within the scope of the present budget and of the available conference rooms at Interim Headquarters, not more than four committees on which all the Members are represented can meet simultaneously.

<sup>11</sup>The paragraph was adopted by 10 votes to 1, with 1 abstention.

<sup>7</sup>The drafting change proposed in the second subparagraph was adopted by 8 votes to 1, with 3 abstentions.

<sup>8</sup>The substance of the recommendation was adopted by 8 votes to 4, with 1 abstention.

<sup>9</sup>The paragraph was adopted by 10 votes to 2, with 1 abstention.

15. The Special Committee examined several proposals designed to relieve the General Committee of part of its present responsibilities by entrusting some of its functions to a special agenda committee meeting before the opening of the session. The main arguments in favour of the establishment of an agenda committee were that, at present, the General Committee performs its functions relating to the provisional agenda and the supplementary list during the first days of the session and the general debate in the plenary meetings and the work of the Committees is thereby delayed. In the opinion of the authors of the proposals, it would be advantageous to entrust the examination of the agenda to a committee which would be less pressed for time, thus making it easier for delegations to find grounds for agreement.

It was suggested that the agenda committee should consist of representatives of Members who were represented in the General Committee of the preceding session or, alternatively, that it should be composed of representatives of fifteen Members elected annually by the General Assembly.

The meetings of the agenda committee would be held during the two- to three-weeks period preceding the opening of the session and its duties would cease, at the latest, when the members of the General Committee are elected. It was proposed that, in order to avoid repetitious debate, the agenda committee's recommendations on the agenda of the session should be submitted directly to the plenary meeting of the General Assembly for approval.

Some of the proposals provided that, apart from its work on the agenda of the session, the agenda committee might prepare, with the assistance of the Secretary-General, studies and recommendations on the organization of the session, on the possible priorities to be given to items on the agenda, and on the allocation of items to the Main Committees. It was also suggested that the agenda committee might estimate, with the help of the Secretariat, the time which would have to be devoted to the consideration of each item, in committee and in plenary meetings, and might thus facilitate the adoption by the General Assembly of a target date.

Several members of the Special Committee doubted whether the establishment of an agenda committee would actually result in a shortening of the General Assembly's sessions. They also had doubts concerning the degree of authority which the agenda committee would possess and the nature of its relationship with the General Committee. Other members were not ready to express a definite opinion on the proposals which had been submitted and thought that the matter should be further studied and re-examined at a later date.

The Special Committee decided, therefore, to bring the question to the attention of the General Assembly and to transmit to the Assembly the various written proposals which it has received.<sup>12</sup> It also decided to request the Secretary-General to assist the General Assembly by preparing a study on proposals, previously examined, to report on such technical, legal and financial aspects of the question as he may consider pertinent, and to submit to the Assembly his views on the composition and functions of an agenda committee.<sup>13</sup>

16. The Special Committee also considered proposals to set up a committee for nominations of officers of committees or to entrust this task to the agenda committee. After studying these proposals carefully, the Special Committee decided not to make a recommendation in this respect to the General Assembly.<sup>14</sup>

17. Having stressed the importance of a more careful study of the agenda, the Special Committee deems it advisable to recommend that all requests for inclusion of an item in the agenda should be accompanied by a memorandum stating the reasons for the request and, if necessary, by the basic documents or by a draft resolution. Only the memorandum would be obligatory, and the advisability of annexing other documents, especially draft resolutions, would be left to the discretion of the authors of the request for inclusion. In the opinion of the Special Committee, however, this limited obligation would have not only the advantage of facilitating the task of the General Committee and the General Assembly, but also the additional advantage of enabling Member States to prepare themselves more thoroughly for the discussion of items submitted to the General Assembly for consideration.

The Special Committee wishes, however, to emphasize that the General Assembly could not refuse to include an item in the agenda on the sole grounds that the memorandum accompanying the request was inadequate.

The Special Committee therefore recommends the adoption of a new rule 11 (a) drafted as follows:

#### *Rule 11 (a)*

#### *Explanatory memoranda*

*All items proposed for inclusion in the agenda shall be accompanied by a memorandum and, if appropriate, by basic documents or by a draft resolution.*<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup>The proposals concerned are to be found in annex I under 1, B, 2(g); 2, 1; 9.

<sup>13</sup>The paragraph was adopted by 11 votes to 1.

<sup>14</sup>The paragraph was adopted by 11 votes to none, with 2 abstentions.

<sup>15</sup>The paragraph was adopted by 12 votes to 1.

## **IV. RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO THE ORGANIZATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY SESSIONS**

18. The Special Committee examined certain aspects of the internal organization of the General Assembly with a view to finding methods of accelerating the general pace of sessions. It believes that the schedule of the General Assembly must remain flexible and that the methods used for determining it must be such as will take into account the

rapidly changing requirements of the Assembly and its committees. Moreover, these methods must frequently assume an informal character.

The Special Committee wishes to stress the great importance of constant effort on the part of all those responsible for the smooth progress of

the General Assembly's work—the President, the other members of the General Committee, the Secretary-General—to ensure that the Assembly and its committees work at a regular rate and that the best possible use is made of the time at the Assembly's disposal. In this connexion the Special Committee wishes to recommend the addition of a new rule, which would emphasize the responsibility of the General Committee for the progress of the General Assembly's work and which would define the methods for convening meetings of the General Committee. The text of the new rule would be as follows:

*Rule 35 (a)*<sup>16</sup>

*The General Committee shall meet from time to time throughout each session to review the progress of the General Assembly and its committees, and the General Committee shall be convened by the President at such times as he deems necessary, or upon the request of any three members of the General Committee.*<sup>17</sup>

19. During the third session of the General Assembly, the Chairman of the *Ad Hoc* Political Committee took part, without the right to vote, in the meetings of the General Committee. It is the opinion of the Special Committee that this is a desirable practice which should be confirmed in the rules of procedure. Accordingly the Special Committee recommends the addition of a new rule 34 (a) worded as follows:

*Rule 34 (a)*

*Participation of Chairmen of ad hoc committees*

*Chairmen of committees upon which all Members have the right to be represented, and which are established by the General Assembly to meet during the session, shall be entitled to attend meetings of the General Committee and may participate without vote in the discussions.*<sup>18</sup>

20. In order that more frequent meetings of the General Committee should not delay the work of plenary and committee meetings, the Special Committee wishes to mention that it would be desirable for the General Committee to be enabled to meet, whenever necessary, at the same time as the plenary or the Main Committees. (In such cases, one of the Vice-Presidents could take the chair at plenary meetings and the Vice-Chairman could replace the Chairman at Main Committee meetings.)

The Special Committee also considers that in order to save time at the beginning of the session, some of the Main Committees should not wait until the end of the general debate before starting their work.<sup>19</sup>

21. The Special Committee also wishes to suggest that the Secretary-General, apart from the detailed proposals which he submits to the General Committee at the beginning of the session, should, as he has in the past, collect supplementary data, based in particular on the experience of

preceding sessions, which would make it possible to estimate the time likely to be taken by the discussion of each of the items proposed. These data would serve as a basis for the General Committee's recommendations regarding the closing date of the session and would also enable Chairmen to draw up time-tables for their committees. As soon as a committee falls behind its time-table, its Chairman would propose to the committee the holding of supplementary day or night meetings, to enable it to make up for lost time and thus avoid an overload of meetings at the end of the session.

This plan of work would serve as a guide only to Chairmen. Any formal decision that would be binding upon the committee would have to be taken by the committee itself.

In this connexion the Special Committee considers it useful to recommend a new rule, which would confirm the existing practice, by which each Main Committee arranges its own priorities and schedule. In view of the Special Committee's recommendation for the fixing of a target date for the closing of the session, it also appears desirable to specify that in establishing its priorities each Main Committee should take into account the target date fixed by the General Assembly. The following new rule is, therefore, recommended:

*Rule 89 (a)*

*Priorities*

*Each Main Committee, taking into account the target date for the closing of the session fixed by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the General Committee, shall adopt its own priorities and meet as may be necessary to complete the consideration of the items referred to it.*<sup>20</sup>

22. In the past, some of the Main Committees have been allocated more items requiring prolonged consideration than have other committees. This has especially been the case with the First Committee. The Special Committee noted, however, that during the third session of the General Assembly, exception had been made to the principle laid down in rule 89, that "items relating to the same category of subjects shall be referred to the committee or committees dealing with that category of subjects".

The Special Committee feels that the allocation of items to committees might be effected in a less rigid manner and that questions which may be considered as falling within the competence of two or more committees, should preferably be referred to the committee with the lightest agenda.<sup>21</sup>

23. Another means of lightening the task of any given Main Committee would be to consider directly in plenary meeting, without preliminary reference to committee, certain questions which fall within the terms of reference of the Main Committee. This procedure would moreover have the great advantage of reducing to a notable extent repetition of debate.

It is felt that the amount of time saved by this method would be considerable, especially if the Main Committee and plenary meetings could be held concurrently.

<sup>16</sup>This rule would become 35 (b) if the proposal contained in paragraph 25 is approved by the General Assembly.

<sup>17</sup>The paragraph was adopted by 12 votes to none, with 1 abstention.

<sup>18</sup>The paragraph was adopted by 9 votes to 2, with 1 abstention.

<sup>19</sup>The paragraph was adopted by 12 votes to none, with 1 abstention.

<sup>20</sup>The paragraph was adopted by 12 votes to 1.

<sup>21</sup>The paragraph was adopted by 11 votes to none, with 1 abstention.

If the Main Committee could not meet at the same time as the plenary meeting, the fact that the Committee was not meeting would enable another Main Committee to meet in its place.<sup>22</sup>

The consideration of questions in plenary meetings would have the benefit of the attendance of leaders of delegations and of greater solemnity and publicity. The slightly higher cost to the United Nations of plenary meetings, due in particular to the distribution of verbatim records of the meetings, would undoubtedly be compensated by the shorter duration of the session.

The General Committee would be responsible for suggesting to the General Assembly which items on the agenda might be dealt with in this manner. The Special Committee recommends that this method should be introduced on an experimental basis at future sessions.

The Special Committee is of the opinion that this procedure would be especially appropriate for certain questions the essential aspects of which are already familiar to Members, such as items which have been considered by the General Assembly at previous sessions and which do not require either the presence of representatives of non-member States or the hearing of testimony.<sup>23</sup>

24. The problem of the repetition of debate on the same item during one session of the Assembly was the cause of particular concern to the Special Committee. It was recalled in this connexion that, in the past, the same item has sometimes been the subject of full discussion in the General Committee, in plenary meeting and in the Main Committee to which it was referred. It has then been debated in a sub-committee, referred back to the Main Committee and finally considered in plenary meeting.

The Special Committee considers that the General Assembly should make every effort to see that an item reaches as rapidly as possible the committee or sub-committee which has to consider its substance in detail, without detailed discussion of the same item in the General Committee and in plenary meeting.

Once the substance of the question has been considered by the competent committee, in which all Members have had full opportunity of stating their views, all repetition in the General Assembly of the various arguments or of considerations on the technical aspects of the problem should be avoided.

This is the general objective the Special Committee proposes to the General Assembly and its Members. However, it confines itself to the following three practical recommendations.<sup>24</sup>

25. The nature of debates on the agenda in the General Committee should be defined more precisely in rule 35, by adding to it the following sentence:

*In considering matters relating to the agenda of the General Assembly, the General Committee shall not discuss the substance of any item, except in so far as this bears directly upon the question whether the General Committee should recommend the inclusion of the item in the agenda, the rejection of*

*the request for inclusion, or the inclusion of the item in the provisional agenda of a future session, and what priority should be accorded to an item the inclusion of which has been recommended.*

If this proposal is accepted, it would no doubt be advisable to divide rule 35<sup>25</sup> into two rules, one dealing with the functions of the General Committee relating to the agenda and the other dealing with that Committee's other functions. The resulting two rules would read as follows:

#### Rule 35

##### *Functions*

The General Committee shall, at the beginning of each session, consider the provisional agenda, together with the supplementary list, and shall make recommendations to the General Assembly with regard to each item proposed, concerning its inclusion in the agenda, the rejection of the request for inclusion, or the inclusion of the item in the provisional agenda of a future session. It shall, in the same manner, examine requests for the inclusion of additional items in the agenda, and shall make recommendation thereon to the General Assembly.

*In considering matters relating to the agenda of the General Assembly, the General Committee shall not discuss the substance of any item, except in so far as this bears directly upon the question whether the General Committee should recommend the inclusion of the item in the agenda, the rejection of the request for inclusion, or the inclusion of the item in the provisional agenda of a future session, and what priority should be accorded to an item the inclusion of which has been recommended.*

#### Rule 35 (a)

The General Committee shall make recommendations to the General Assembly concerning the closing date of the session. It shall assist the President and the General Assembly in drawing up the agenda for each plenary meeting, in determining the priority of its items, and in the co-ordination of the proceedings of all committees of the General Assembly. It shall assist the President in the general conduct of the work of the General Assembly which falls within the competence of the President. It shall not, however, decide any political question.<sup>26</sup>

26. The Special Committee considers it advisable that the number of representatives allowed to participate in the debate in the plenary meeting on the inclusion of an item in the agenda should be limited. The following rule of procedure is, therefore, proposed:

#### Rule 19 (a)<sup>27</sup>

##### *Debate on inclusion of items*

*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*

<sup>22</sup>See footnote 11.

<sup>23</sup>The paragraph was adopted by 8 votes to 2, with 2 abstentions.

<sup>24</sup>The paragraph was adopted by 8 votes to 1, with 3 abstentions.

<sup>25</sup>See also paragraph 10.

<sup>26</sup>Paragraph adopted by 8 votes to 4, with 1 abstention.  
<sup>27</sup>This rule would become 19 (b) if the recommendation in paragraph 11 is adopted by the General Assembly.

*inclusion. The President may limit the time to be allowed to speakers under this rule.<sup>28</sup>*

27. The plenary meeting which examines a Main Committee's report and adopts a resolution embodying the General Assembly's decision on a problem submitted to it, is of considerable importance. In many cases it is useful to allow a general debate concerning the principles on which the Committee's recommendations were based, or even to provide opportunity for improving the proposed draft resolution by the adoption of amendments. Nevertheless, in view of the identical composition of the plenary meeting and the Main Committees, it seems to the Special Committee that the re-discussion of questions should not be encouraged, except in cases where this may be useful for the work of the General Assembly and genuinely safeguards the legitimate rights of minorities.

The application of rule 59 was therefore considered carefully by the Special Committee, which proposes that its meaning should be clarified by the following amendment to the rule:

#### *Rule 59*

##### *Discussion of committee reports*

*Questions on which a Main Committee has submitted a report shall not be discussed in plenary meeting unless, after a vote taken without debate, at least one-third of the Members present and voting indicate that they consider discussion necessary.*

This rule should be applied in the following manner. When a Committee's report has been submitted by its Rapporteur, the President should call upon the General Assembly to vote, without preliminary debate, on whether it wishes to discuss

<sup>28</sup>The paragraph was adopted by 12 votes to 1.

the report. If one-third of the Members declare themselves in favour of discussion, the debate should proceed in the usual manner.

If one-third of the Members present and voting do not request a discussion, the draft resolution submitted by the Committee should be put to the vote immediately, the President being entitled under rule 80 to authorize Members to explain their votes either before or after the voting.

At the time of voting in pursuance of rule 59, on the advisability of a discussion, Members of the General Assembly will have before them the texts of any amendments or proposals which have been submitted for consideration by the plenary meeting and which have been distributed to them under rule 71. They will thus be in a position to decide upon the importance and expediency of a renewed discussion of the question.

The Special Committee is convinced that should the occasion arise, a minority of at least one-third of the Members of the Assembly would declare themselves in favour of discussion of an important proposal or amendment which would introduce a new element into the consideration of the item. It feels, however, that a small number of Members should not be in a position to impose upon the large majority a fresh discussion of a question which had been previously examined in full detail in Committee.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup>The paragraph was voted in parts as follows:

The first sub-paragraph was adopted by 11 votes to 1, with 1 abstention.

The second sub-paragraph, including the text of the rule, was adopted by 9 votes to 3, with 1 abstention.

The third sub-paragraph was adopted by 9 votes to 3, with 1 abstention.

The fourth sub-paragraph was adopted by 8 votes to 5.

The fifth sub-paragraph was adopted by 9 votes to 4.

The sixth sub-paragraph was adopted by 8 votes to 5.

The paragraph as a whole was adopted by 8 votes to 3, with 2 abstentions.

## **V. RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO THE CONDUCT OF DEBATES IN PLENARY MEETINGS AND IN COMMITTEES**

28. The Special Committee recalls that much time has been lost in the past by committees and by the General Assembly itself, owing to the fact that meetings have not begun at the scheduled time. Precise calculations on this subject prove that the accumulated delays undoubtedly cause a prolongation of the session.

The Special Committee is aware that the interval between the time fixed for the opening of the meeting and its actual opening is often profitably used by certain delegations in valuable informal conversations, which in many cases serve to facilitate debates. The Special Committee considers, however, that the General Assembly should insist on greater punctuality and should take the necessary measures to remedy the present situation.

The Special Committee proposes that, as far as committees are concerned, Chairmen, if they think it appropriate, should have power to declare a meeting open, when only one-third of the representatives are present, although the presence of the majority would still be required for a question to be put to the vote.

The Special Committee proposes that rule 98 be amended as follows:

#### *Rule 98*

##### *Quorum*

*The Chairman may declare the opening of a meeting of the committee when one-third of the members are present. The presence of a majority of the members of the committee is, however, required for a question to be put to the vote.*

In this connexion, the Special Committee feels that it would be advisable to generalize the system of bells and lights warning representatives that a meeting is about to begin or has just begun. Similar technical devices might also be used to warn representatives that a vote is about to take place.<sup>30</sup>

29. A proposal to extend the use of mechanical and technical devices in connexion with the work of the Assembly was submitted to the Special Committee. Among the processes contemplated, special reference was made to the electrical voting systems used in certain national parliaments.

<sup>30</sup>The second sentence of the second sub-paragraph was voted on separately and adopted by 13 votes to none.

The last sub-paragraph was adopted by 12 votes to none, with 1 abstention.

The paragraph as a whole was adopted by 12 votes to 1.



The Special Committee requested the Secretary-General to keep it informed of the studies he has undertaken in this respect. It transmits to the General Assembly the text of a study, prepared at its request by the Secretariat (Annex II).<sup>81</sup>

30. The Special Committee had before it several proposals to limit the time to be allowed to speakers in plenary meetings and in committees. After studying the problem, the Special Committee expresses the view that a general time-limit for statements on the substance of a question is not desirable, and that, within the limits laid down in the rules of procedure, representatives should be entitled to give full expression to their points of view.

The Special Committee wishes, however, to draw the General Assembly's attention to rules 65 and 103 and to suggest that they should be applied whenever this would contribute to the good progress of the Assembly's work.

Noting that it has been decided in the past, under rules 65 and 103, to limit not only the time to be allowed to each speaker, but also the number of times that any representative may speak on the same question, the Special Committee confines itself to proposing the following amendments to these rules.

#### *Rules 65 and 103*

##### *Time limit on speeches*

The General Assembly (the committee) may limit the time to be allowed to each speaker *and the number of times each representative may speak on any question. When debate is limited and a representative has spoken his allotted time, the President (Chairman) shall call him to order without delay.*<sup>82</sup>

31. While considering that caution should be exercised as regards a general limitation of the time representatives may speak on the substance of a matter, the Special Committee feels that a limitation of the time allowed to representatives to speak on procedural questions may offer important advantages.

Hence the Special Committee is of the opinion that, without any change in the principles of rules 67 and 105, 68 and 106, 69 and 107, the President and Chairmen should be empowered to limit the duration of speeches made under these rules.

The Special Committee proposes that these rules be amended as follows:

#### *Rules 67 and 105*

##### *Adjournment of debate*

During the discussion of any matter, a representative may move the adjournment of the debate on the item under discussion. In addition to the proposer of the motion, two representatives may speak in favour of, and two against, the motion, after which the motion shall be immediately put to the vote. *The President (Chairman) may limit the time to be allowed to speakers under this rule.*

<sup>81</sup>The paragraph was adopted by 12 votes to none, with 1 abstention.

<sup>82</sup>The paragraph was adopted by 11 votes to 1, with 1 abstention.

#### *Rules 68 and 106*

##### *Closure of debate*

A representative may at any time move the closure of the debate on the item under discussion, whether or not any other representative has signified his wish to speak. Permission to speak on the closure of the debate shall be accorded only to two speakers opposing the closure, after which the motion shall be immediately put to the vote. If the General Assembly (committee) is in favour of the closure the President (Chairman) shall declare the closure of the debate. *The President (Chairman) may limit the time to be allowed to speakers under this rule.*

#### *Rules 69 and 107*

##### *Suspension or adjournment of the meeting*

During the discussion of any matter, a representative may move the suspension or the adjournment of the meeting. Such motions shall not be debated, but shall be immediately put to the vote. *The President (Chairman) may limit the time to be allowed to the speaker moving the suspension or adjournment of the meeting.*<sup>83</sup>

32. The Special Committee examined the second sentence of rules 80 and 117 regarding the explanations of votes which representatives may wish to present. In this respect the Special Committee wishes to confirm the discretionary powers of presiding officers to allow or disallow such explanations, and accordingly to rule whether these explanations will be given before or after the voting. The Special Committee is likewise of the opinion that the presiding officer, taking into account the number of requests to give explanations and their possible importance, should be empowered to limit the time allowed. The Special Committee proposes that rules 80 and 117 should be supplemented as follows:

#### *Rules 80 and 117*

##### *Conduct during voting*

After the President (Chairman) has announced the beginning of voting, no representative shall interrupt the voting except on a point of order in connexion with the actual conduct of the voting. *The President (Chairman) may permit members to explain their votes either before or after the voting. The President (Chairman) may limit the time to be allowed for such explanations.*<sup>84</sup>

33. The Special Committee considers that the rules relating to voting on proposals in parts would be clarified if the General Assembly adopted the wording of the corresponding rules of the Economic and Social Council's rules of procedure. Rules 81 and 118 would then read as follows:

#### *Rules 81 and 118*

##### *Division of proposals*

Parts of a proposal shall be voted on separately if a representative requests that the proposal be

<sup>83</sup>The paragraph was adopted by 9 votes to 3, with 1 abstention.

<sup>84</sup>The paragraph was adopted by 10 votes to 1, with 2 abstentions.

divided. *Those parts of the proposal which have been approved shall then be put to the vote as a whole. If all operative parts of the proposal have been rejected, the proposal shall be considered to have been rejected as a whole.*<sup>35</sup>

34. The Special Committee noted that the existing rules of procedure do not indicate whether amendments to proposals requiring a two-thirds majority for adoption also have to satisfy the same requirement. Nor do they state whether or not, when proposals are voted in parts, each part requires a two-thirds majority for adoption. In view of the difficulties which arose in the past in this connexion and the particular importance of this question which relates to the application and the interpretation of Article 18, paragraphs 2 and 3, of the Charter, the Special Committee recommends that this problem should be examined by the General Assembly with particular care and a final decision reached only on the basis of a thorough legal analysis.<sup>36</sup>

35. Several members of the Special Committee felt that rules 72 and 110, relating to motions calling for a decision on the competence of the General Assembly, were not drafted with sufficient clarity. As these rules deal with a procedural matter of considerable importance, the Special Committee wishes to recommend that the competent committee of the General Assembly should re-examine the text and study the application of these rules.<sup>37</sup>

36. The Special Committee did not examine a proposal which had been submitted to it to introduce a new rule which would define the conditions upon which the application of the rules of procedure could be suspended.<sup>38</sup> The representative of Canada, who submitted this proposal, did not, in view of the shortage of time, insist on its consideration by the Special Committee, but reserved the right of his delegation to raise the question during the debate on the report of the Special Committee by the General Assembly.

37. The Special Committee also feels it desirable to clarify the meaning and application of rules 64 and 102 relating to points of order. It is the opinion of the Special Committee that a valid point of order may relate to the manner in which the debate is conducted, to the maintenance of order, to the observance of the rules of procedure, or to the manner in which Chairmen exercise the powers conferred upon them by the rules. Thus, within the scope of the General Assembly's rules of procedure, representatives are enabled to direct the attention of the presiding officer to violations or misapplications of the rules of procedure by other representatives or by the presiding officer himself. Points of order may also refer to legitimate requests for information, to material arrangements (temperature of the room, seating, interpretation system), to documents, translations and so on. On the other hand, no representative, when rising to a

point of order, should be permitted to speak on the substance of the matter under discussion.

Under rules 64 and 102, presiding officers must give an immediate ruling on every point of order, and if the ruling is challenged, they must put it to the vote; no discussion may take place. Hence, there can be no question of seconding or debating a point of order. Moreover, as the presiding officer must immediately dispose of each point of order as it is raised, two or more points of order can never be before the Chair at the same time.

In the light of these considerations the Special Committee proposes the following text for rules 64 and 102, giving them added precision.

### *Rules 64 and 102*

#### *Points of order*

During the discussion of any matter, a representative may rise to a point of order, and the point of order shall be immediately decided by the President (Chairman) in accordance with the rules of procedure. A representative may appeal against the ruling of the President (Chairman). The appeal shall immediately be put to the vote and the President's (Chairman's) ruling shall stand unless overruled by a majority of the Members present and voting. *A representative rising to a point of order may not speak on the substance of the matter under discussion.*<sup>39</sup>

38. The Special Committee feels that the President of the General Assembly or the Chairman of a committee should be able, at any time and without any reflection on his impartiality, to draw members' attention to measures likely to expedite their proceedings. The Special Committee considers that this function of the Chair should be mentioned in the rules of procedure and proposes the addition of the following sentences to rules 31 and 97.

*The President (Chairman) may, in the course of the discussion of an item, propose to the Assembly (committee) the limitation of the time to be allowed to speakers, the limitation of the number of times each representative may speak on any question, the closure of the list of speakers or the closure of the debate. He may also propose the suspension or the adjournment of the meeting or the adjournment of the debate on the item under discussion.*<sup>40</sup>

39. At this point the Special Committee desires to stress once more the importance of the role of the President of the General Assembly and of the Chairmen of committees. The satisfactory progress of the proceedings depends essentially on their competence, authority, tact and impartiality, their respect for the rights both of minorities as well as majorities, and their familiarity with the rules of procedure. The General Assembly, or the Committee, as the case may be, is the master of the conduct of its own proceedings. It is, however, the special task of the Chairmen to guide the proceedings of these bodies in the best interests of all the Members.

The Special Committee considers that everything possible should be done to help Chairmen in

<sup>35</sup>The second sentence of rule 81 (118) was adopted by 11 votes to 1. The third sentence of the rule was adopted by 8 votes to 3, with 1 abstention.

The paragraph as a whole was adopted by 9 votes to 2, with 1 abstention.

<sup>36</sup>The paragraph was adopted by 12 votes to 1.

The representative of Belgium suggested that a request to the International Court of Justice for an advisory opinion might be envisaged.

<sup>37</sup>The paragraph was adopted by 11 votes to 1.

<sup>38</sup>See annex I, No. 6, paragraph 5.

<sup>39</sup>The first and second sub-paragraphs were adopted by 12 votes to 1. The addition of the last sentence of the rule was adopted by 10 votes to 1 with 2 abstentions.

<sup>40</sup>The paragraph was adopted by 12 votes to 1.



the discharge of these important functions. The President of the General Assembly and the General Committee should assist the Chairmen of committees with their advice. The Secretary-General should place his experience and all his authority at their disposal.<sup>41</sup>

The Special Committee is happy to note the Secretariat's valuable practice of holding daily meetings of the committee secretaries, under the chairmanship of the Executive Assistant to the Secretary-General, where the procedural questions

<sup>41</sup>A suggestion was made that the Secretary-General should prepare, from time to time, commentaries on the rules of procedure, which would be placed at the disposal of Chairmen and of representatives to the General Assembly.

arising from day to day in the General Assembly and committees are thoroughly examined. Furthermore, the Special Committee stresses the value of having, as in the past, a legal adviser from the Secretariat in attendance at meetings to give the Chairmen or the committee such advice as they may need for the conduct of their business and the interpretation of the rules of procedure.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>42</sup>The paragraph was voted in parts as follows:

The first sentence of the first sub-paragraph was adopted by 12 votes to 1.

The second and third sentences of the first sub-paragraph were adopted by 13 votes to none.

The second and third sub-paragraphs were adopted by 12 votes to none, with 1 abstention.

The paragraph as a whole was adopted by 12 votes to none, with 1 abstention.

## VI. SECRETARY-GENERAL'S PROPOSAL FOR AN INTERVAL OF PRAYER OR MEDITATION IN MEETINGS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

40. The Special Committee has examined a proposal submitted by the Secretary-General, to the effect that in the first plenary meeting of the General Assembly on a given day, the President should invite the Members of the United Nations to observe one minute of silence dedicated to prayer or meditation. The Secretary-General, in introducing this proposal, explained to the Special Committee that many hundreds of letters from private individuals and organizations have urged that the General Assembly should devote a few moments of its time to prayer.

The Special Committee recognizes the lofty motives which have inspired the authors of these communications. It is, on the other hand, aware of the fact that the Members of the United Nations represent people belonging to nearly every religion, creed and philosophical outlook in the world, and that it would not be possible to introduce a public prayer which would satisfy all tenets and give offence to none. Some of the members also felt that too frequent repetition of an act of this nature

might deprive it of some of its solemnity, and were generally inclined to favour a recommendation that one minute of silence should be observed at the opening and at the closing meeting of the General Assembly.

If these views are shared by the General Assembly, the following new rule of procedure might be inserted before rule 57:

### *Rule 56 (a)*

#### *Minute of silent prayer or meditation*

*Immediately after the opening of the first plenary meeting and immediately preceding the closing of the final plenary meeting of each session of the General Assembly, the President shall invite the representatives to observe one minute of silence dedicated to prayer or meditation.*<sup>43</sup>

<sup>43</sup>The paragraph was adopted by 8 votes to none, with 4 abstentions.

## VII. STATEMENTS OF VIEWS OF INDIVIDUAL DELEGATIONS

41. The representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics requested that the views of his delegation on the recommendations presented by the Special Committee to the General Assembly should be summarized as follows:

42. The representative of the USSR felt that sufficient reasons had not been presented in the Special Committee for amending the present rules of procedure of the General Assembly. He felt that the proposals of the Special Committee were not realistic and would not result in a saving of time, that they did not respect the rights of minorities and tended to increase excessively the powers of the President and the Chairmen of committees.

43. With particular regard to the recommendation contained in paragraph 9 of the report, concerning the target date for the closing of the session, the representative of the USSR was of the opinion that neither at the beginning of the session, nor even during the session, was it possible to determine with precision how much time would be required for the full consideration of agenda items.

Moreover, the acceptance of this recommendation, while enabling the majority to obtain full consideration for those items in which it had an interest, might prevent the discussion of questions considered as important by Members belonging to the minority, and therefore infringe upon one of the essential rights of individual delegations.

44. It was for the same reasons that the representative of the USSR objected to assigning a priority to agenda items according to their importance, as this determination would depend only on the will of the majority. The USSR delegation was also opposed to the recommendation contained in paragraph 11, which would make it even more difficult than at present for delegations belonging to the minority to have items included in the agenda during the session.

45. The USSR delegation was similarly opposed to the recommendation contained in paragraph 12, as its acceptance might provide the majority with the means of preventing discussion in the General Assembly of important items through formal procedural decisions. Moreover, the acceptance of

this recommendation would not result in a saving of time as lengthy debate would precede a decision to refer items without discussion to other organs of the United Nations.

46. The USSR delegation was opposed to the recommendations in paragraphs 13 and 14, which in its opinion lacked clarity and were altogether unnecessary. In particular it objected to the establishment of special committees of the General Assembly to meet between sessions to examine international conventions. This would not result in an economy of time, but would increase the work of the delegations and the expenses of the United Nations.

47. The USSR delegation was unable to vote in favour of the recommendation contained in paragraph 17, as it feared that its acceptance would make it possible to exclude an item from the agenda under the pretext that the documentation was not sufficient. Furthermore, a discussion on the question of whether or not the documentation was adequate could take considerable time and would result in a lengthening of the session.

48. The USSR delegation also objected to paragraph 21 of the report as the recommendations contained in it relate to a time-table for the consideration of items by committees and would further strengthen the position of the majority. The data to be prepared by the Secretary-General in this respect, based on the experience of preceding sessions, would be of no value in estimating the time required for the consideration of items of a coming session.

49. The USSR delegation expressed particularly strong objections to the recommendations contained in paragraphs 23 to 25 and 27. The proposal contained in paragraph 23 would not result in saving time as long discussions might take place as to which items would be considered directly by the plenary. Making the plenary act as a committee would not increase the efficiency of the General Assembly and this procedure would certainly not result in the constructive consideration of important political items.

As to paragraph 27, the USSR delegation strongly objected to the possibility of preventing the consideration of amendments and proposals in

the plenary and of transforming the supreme organ of the General Assembly into a voting machine in the service of the majority. It is essential, in the opinion of the USSR delegation, that even one delegation should be entitled to state in plenary the reasons why it objects to a resolution which is to be put to a vote.

50. The USSR delegation opposed the Special Committee's proposal referred to in paragraph 28. In its view a quorum of one-third for debate would result in a large number of Members voting on questions without having participated in preliminary discussions. It felt that this recommendation neglected the importance of debates for reaching general agreement on international problems.

51. With respect to paragraphs 30 to 32 and 37 to 39, the USSR delegation has stated that it is opposed to all proposals which increase the powers of the President and the Chairmen of committees at the expense of the individual rights of delegations. The USSR delegation believes that presiding officers are the servants of the organs over which they preside and that the plenary and the committees must remain the complete masters of their own proceedings.

52. The representative of the USSR emphasized repeatedly in the statements he made to the Special Committee, that his delegation was in favour of full observance of democratic principles in the field of international co-operation, and considered that the effectiveness of the General Assembly depends above all on the reaching of unanimous decisions by Members of the United Nations, with due regard to the interests of all delegations. The USSR delegation was, however, against a policy of pressure and intimidation by one group of delegations on the others. It felt that General Assembly sessions were unduly prolonged by inclusion in the agenda of certain unnecessary items which only serve the interests of certain groups of delegations. The USSR delegation considered, therefore, that the recommendations accepted in the Special Committee were not directed at the promotion of the principles of co-operation in the international field and voted against all the recommendations contained in this respect, with the exception of those contained in paragraphs 18 and 40.

## Annex I

### PROPOSALS SUBMITTED TO THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE

#### 1A. Letter dated 29 March 1949 from the delegations of Denmark, Norway and Sweden to the Secretary-General (A/825)

New York, 29 March 1949

On behalf of our respective delegations, we submit herewith a revised edition of the draft resolution on General Assembly methods and procedures presented by us in Paris.<sup>1</sup> We should appreciate it if you would be good enough to circulate this revised edition as soon as possible among the delegations to the United Nations together with the enclosed memorandum containing some suggestions concerning the subject matter.

(Signed) William BORBERG

(Signed) Arne SUNDE

(Signed) Sven GRAFSTROM

#### CREATION OF AN *ad hoc* COMMITTEE ON METHODS AND PROCEDURES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

##### REVISED DRAFT RESOLUTIONS<sup>2</sup>

##### *The General Assembly,*

In the exercise of its power under Article 10 of the Charter to make recommendations relating to the powers and functions of any organs of the United Nations,

*Mindful* of the increasing length of General Assembly sessions, and the growing tendency towards protracted debates in its plenary meetings and committees,

*Decides* to create an *ad hoc* committee consisting of the following fifteen Members of the General Assembly ..... In order to:

1. Consider methods and procedures which would enable the General Assembly and its Committees to discharge their functions more effectively and expeditiously;

2. Submit a preliminary report to the General Assembly during the second part of its third session;

3. Transmit a second report to the Secretary-General, not later than 15 August 1949, for circulation to Members, and for consideration at the fourth regular session of the General Assembly;

*Invites* the Secretary-General to collaborate closely with the *ad hoc* committee in its work.

<sup>1</sup>See document A/743.

<sup>2</sup>For the text of the original draft resolution, see document A/743.

#### SOME SUGGESTIONS REGARDING THE SCANDINAVIAN PROPOSAL ON GENERAL ASSEMBLY METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The Danish, Norwegian and Swedish delegations fully realize that the important problem of increasing the effectiveness of the work and procedures of the United Nations merits not only careful but also continued study. However, it is the hope of these delegations that the proposed *ad hoc* committee should reach some conclusions during the second part of the third session with a view to putting these conclusions into effect already at the beginning of the fourth regular session.

The sponsors would like to outline here a few suggestions which might be of some help to the *ad hoc* committee as a basis for discussion.

##### 1. *Reduction of the amount of work to be completed by the General Assembly at a given session:*

(a) The General Committee should give greater attention to the urgency of proposed items in relation to the total agenda and the time available for the session;

(b) The rules of procedure could be amended to provide that items proposed for inclusion in the agenda be accompanied by a draft resolution or by a memorandum stating the reasons in favour of including such items.

##### 2. *Increase in the speed at which the Assembly deals with matters before it:*

(a) Mechanical and technical processes. The kind of technical process the sponsors have in mind is especially the electric voting system which has produced very good results in several parliaments;

(b) In collaboration with the Secretary-General, the General Committee could, with the recommendation regarding the adoption of the agenda, suggest a target date for the termination of the session;

(c) Each Main Committee, after examination of its agenda as allocated to it, could fix its tentative schedule with target dates for each item;

(d) All meetings should be called to order at the scheduled hour. Changes in the present quorum rules might be suggested;

(e) Re-examination of the rules regarding time limit for speeches.

#### 1B. Denmark, Norway and Sweden: Additional suggestions regarding the Scandinavian proposal on General Assembly methods and procedures (A/825/Add.1)

Add under the relevant headings of the second section of document A/825 the following:

1. *Reduction of the amount of work to be completed by the General Assembly at a given session:*

(c) Consideration of the question whether international conventions already adopted at an international conference should be discussed again by the General Assembly or other organs of the United Nations.

2. *Increase in the speed at which the Assembly deals with matters before it:*

(f) The possibility of introducing into the rules of procedure of the General Assembly certain revised rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Council (E/1293/Add.1) in particular chapters X and XI, including the new provision in rule 63, that when parts of a proposal at the request of a representative have been voted on separately, only those parts which have been approved shall be put to the vote as a whole, and that the proposal shall be considered to have been rejected as a whole, if all operative parts thereof have been rejected;

(g) The question of creating a committee to meet a short time in advance of a new session to prepare its work (agenda, allocation of items to committees, nominations etc.);

(h) Methods to promote the selection of experienced Chairmen of committees in order to secure efficient and speedy conduct of business in committees;

(i) Submission by delegations and distribution in advance of session of lists of representatives and alternate representatives who will attend session;

(j) In order to avoid debate in Main Committees of questions of drafting, the Chairman might to a greater extent than hitherto refer such questions to the Rapporteur in collaboration with the Secretariat and representatives who have proposed amendments.

## 2. Letter dated 2 May 1949 from the delegation of the Union of South Africa to the Secretary-General of the United Nations (A/AC.30/1)

New York, 2 May 1949

### METHODS AND PROCEDURES WHICH WOULD ENABLE THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO DISCHARGE ITS FUNCTIONS MORE EFFECTIVELY AND EXPEDITIOUSLY

At the meeting of the *Ad Hoc* Political Committee held on 18 April 1949, during which the above-mentioned subject was discussed, the South African representative suggested that delegations might submit proposals in writing for consideration by the Special Committee which it was the intention to set up to study the question. The Committee clearly approved of the idea, and the Chairman accordingly extended an invitation to delegations to submit their proposals in writing.

I have, accordingly, the honour, on behalf of the Government of the Union of South Africa, to suggest the following procedures which the Special Committee might examine in addition to the tentative proposals submitted by the delegations of Denmark, Norway and Sweden in document A/825 of 29 March 1949:

1. *The length of sessions of the General Assembly:*

It is our view that sessions of the General Assembly should be limited, in advance, to six or at most eight weeks, both on grounds of economy and also because it is most difficult for Ministers of State and diplomatic representatives attending the Assembly to be absent from their regular posts for extended periods of time.

In order to arrive at a reasonable estimate as to the time that may be required to complete the agenda, a special committee, representative of the Secretariat, the President of the Assembly, and the General Committee might be established:

(a) To determine in advance the number of hours of debating time to be allocated to each item on the agenda;

(b) To decide the order of importance and priority of items;

(c) To make recommendations to the General Committee and the Assembly accordingly.

As an alternative, the Special Committee might give consideration to the desirability of establishing a standing agenda committee within the Secretariat, comprised of, say, six officials under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General himself or his nominee. These members could well be the experts who already function as representatives of the Secretariat on each of the six standing committees, and who should therefore, in the light of past experience, be able to estimate within reasonable limits the time necessary to dispose of any particular item in Committee and Assembly. In the light of such an estimate, it is submitted, the General Committee should assign a priority rating to each item on the agenda.

2. *Limitation of speeches:*

The suggestion that a specific number of hours be allotted for the discussion of each item on the agenda carries with it, as an essential corollary, the suggestion that the maximum duration of members' speeches on any item be strictly defined.

In practice, a speech lasting forty minutes should be sufficient to introduce, or to reply to, a motion or debate. When a speaker, however, is a party to a dispute under discussion it is fair to recognize that the vital interests of his country are at stake, and that he might be allowed eighty minutes; other speakers might be limited to thirty minutes for the first speech and all speakers to fifteen minutes for subsequent speeches, save in the case of a proposer or party to a dispute replying to the debate. Where delegations feel that the time allowed for discussion is insufficient for adequate presentation of their views, a procedure might be adopted which would permit of statements being circulated among members of the Committee in writing.

3. *Admissibility of items:*

The present practice of admitting virtually all suggested items, including those put forward at the last moment, frequently results in overloading the agenda. This profusion of last-minute items is a practice which can only be avoided by firm insistence on the submission of items within the period prescribed by the rules of procedure.

We therefore feel that only items directly relating to international peace and security should in

future be included in the supplementary agenda and that apart from these, no additional items should be accepted after the final date for the submission of items for inclusion on the agenda, provided that items submitted after that date may be added to the agenda, upon receiving a two-thirds vote both in the General Committee and the General Assembly.

4. *Methods to facilitate the handling of debates by Committee Chairmen:*

To obviate the sometimes protracted debates on procedural issues it is suggested that the Secretary-General, in consultation with the President of the Assembly, should appoint to the staff of each Committee a legal expert whose function it would be to advise the Committee Chairman on the handling of debates and of the procedural items and decisions which constantly arise. My delegation is of opinion that the rule of procedure governing the relevance of speeches to the matter under discussion should be strictly enforced. In fact, the rules of procedure might be amended so as to enable Chairmen to maintain a stricter control of proceedings in their Committees. In particular it is suggested that the amended rules be designed to strengthen the powers of Chairmen:

(a) To interrupt speeches and call speakers to order on grounds of irrelevancy;

(b) To call speakers to order wherever they resort to invective or display personal animus directed against either an individual or a State, or where they in any other way detract from the dignity of the proceedings;

(c) To compel the withdrawal of a speaker who persistently ignores a Chairman's ruling. Such authority might for instance be exercised by a Chairman where a ruling by him, which is being upheld by the Committee, is again persistently questioned on a point of order by the member(s) opposing it.

In short, the measures outlined above involve the limiting of the duration of the Assembly, which, in turn, demands the preparation of a schedule showing priority of agenda items and the debating time allotted to each. Concomitants to the above suggestions are the limitation of speeches, augmented powers for Chairmen of Committees to control debate and, if necessary, to silence unruly speakers.

5. *Punctuality:*

A good deal of time is wasted because of meetings of the Assembly and of its Committees not starting on time. My delegation therefore feels that strict punctuality should be enforced, if necessary by means of an appropriate amendment of the rules concerning the necessary quorum for the Assembly and its Committees.

We also feel further valuable time could be saved if afternoon meetings were regularly to start at 2.30 p.m. instead of 3.00 p.m., as now.

It follows from the foregoing that items with a low priority rating, not disposed of during the time pre-determined for the conduct of the Assembly's business, should be deferred to the next regular session of the Assembly.

I should be grateful if the foregoing suggestions

could be conveyed to the members of the Special Committee concerned.

(Signed) Eric H. Louw  
Leader of the Delegation of the  
Union of South Africa

3. **Note verbale dated 19 May 1949 from the Permanent Greek Delegation to the Secretary-General of the United Nations (A/AC.30/2)**

New York, 19 May 1949

The Permanent Greek Delegation presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and, with reference to his note No. SG/343-1-RS of 12 May 1949, has the honour to bring the following to his knowledge:

The Permanent Greek Delegation, by voting in the General Assembly in favour of the resolution concerning the creation of an *ad hoc* committee to consider methods and procedures which would enable the Assembly to dispatch its functions more effectively and expeditiously, has expressed its concern for a prompt improvement of these methods and procedures and, in this spirit, would like to present here below some suggestions which may help the Special Committee in formulating its recommendations to the Assembly.

1. The view expressed by several delegations is endorsed, that is, that requests for inclusion of items (under rules 12, 13, 14, 16, 17 and 18) should be accompanied by a written memorandum in order to avoid the presentation of items which are not sufficiently documented.

2. The practice should be established that the Member States not participating in United Nations organs with a limited membership (mainly in the Economic and Social Council) submit their views, orally or in writing, on questions of general interest dealt with by such organs. This might result in clearing up problems which will later arise in the General Assembly. In cases where the General Assembly deals with projects prepared by international conferences of experts, the practice should be established of avoiding the consideration of details in such projects.

3. When Committee reports are brought before the Assembly, the application of rule 59 should be considered; an alternate solution would be to permit discussion on the Committee report to two members of the majority and three of the minority, not including, as a matter of course, the States directly concerned.

4. The rules concerning the time-limit of speeches (65, 103) should find compulsory application, while the presiding officer concerned should be granted the right to make exceptions to the rule: an alternate solution would be a recommendation to the presiding officers for a regular application of the above rules. An exception may be made for the general debate in the plenum.

5. A time-limit of five minutes maximum should be introduced for the explanation of votes, in order to secure a genuine explanation and avoid renewing the debate on the substance. No explanation of vote should be permitted on procedural motions such as those listed in rules 70 and 108.

6. Every representative rising to a point of order should mention the rule of procedure the violation of which constitutes his point.

#### 4. United Kingdom: Proposals (A/AC.30/3)

New York, 4 June 1949

The Government of the United Kingdom does not believe that changes in the rules of procedure will be a substitute for strong chairmanship and the proper enforcement of the existing rules of procedure; some of the delays and indeed abuses of the processes of the General Assembly can be traced to a lack of determination to ensure that the rules of procedure are observed. However, the existing rules of procedure could be made more effective by certain amendments and the addition of new rules. The United Kingdom therefore suggests, for the consideration of the Committee, the following procedures and practices which might be usefully adopted by the General Assembly and its Committees; at the same time it reserves its right to submit further proposals in the course of the Committee's discussions.

##### 1. *Speeches should be limited in length and in number:*

(a) There is a tendency to propose time-limits which are too high; for example, the statistics on page 26 of the Carnegie Endowment memorandum suggest that time-limits of ten and five minutes would not make any substantial difference in the length of discussions in Committees. However, the United Kingdom would follow the sense of the majority of the Committee in determining time-limits.

Time-limits are especially appropriate in debates upon procedure, and should be applied to speeches in the General Committee on the examination of items for inclusion in the agenda, or in the General Assembly on the General Committee's recommendations, and in Committees and plenary after the Chairman or the President has ruled that a question is one of procedure.

Chairmen of Committees should also as a general rule impose time-limits when permitting explanations of vote under rule 117.

(b) The length of speeches should further be limited by a new rule of procedure providing that, where a speech has been circulated to members of a Committee or to the Press simultaneously with its delivery, the speaker shall give a summary only of the speech not longer than ten minutes.

(c) It is suggested that the following might be substituted for existing rule 59 to limit discussion in plenary of the reports of the Main Committees:

"Reports of Main Committees shall not be discussed in a plenary meeting unless a majority of the Members present and voting at the plenary meeting consider such a discussion to be necessary."

##### 2. *Committee meetings should start punctually:*

There are certain practical difficulties, especially when the General Assembly meets at Flushing, in the way of starting committees earlier than the normal scheduled times. However, rule 98 should be amended to enable a Committee to start pro-

ceedings with a quorum of one-third of the members, providing, however, that no vote could be taken until a majority of the members of the committee were present.

##### 3. *Committees should not negotiate international conventions as part of their normal work:*

It is doubtless administratively convenient that international conventions such as those dealing with genocide, freedom of information, and human rights should be worked out in a Committee of the Assembly rather than in a specially convened international conference; further, it is important that conventions of this kind should be directly sponsored by the General Assembly. But all experience shows that a Committee is unfitted by its size to draft conventions, and further it cannot at the same session deal satisfactorily with the ordinary items properly referred to it. There are two possible solutions: first, that the committee concerned should continue to sit after the close of the session (which would presumably be technically "adjourned") to undertake the negotiation of conventions recommended by the Assembly; second, that conventions of the kind which have been referred to the Third Committee in the past should be referred back to the Economic and Social Council, when it appears that substantial agreement upon their provisions has not yet been obtained.

##### 4. *Adoption and priority of items of the agenda:*

(a) Rule 35 should be made more explicit and should empower the General Committee to recommend to the Assembly the rejection or postponement of items when this appears necessary. It is for consideration whether rule 14 might not also be amended in the sense that a two-thirds majority should be necessary to adopt into the agenda an additional item or an item which has been recommended for rejection or postponement by the General Committee.

(b) The General Committee should also, in assisting the General Assembly to draw up the agenda, create two categories of items:

(i) Those which are of prime importance or urgency; these should be disposed of by the appropriate committee before any other items are referred to it by the Assembly;

(ii) Formal or non-controversial items which should be referred to the committee having the shortest agenda, even though it is not necessarily the appropriate committee.

Committee Chairmen should also undertake to schedule the work of their committees as far as possible in advance so that the committee may work at an equal rate throughout the session, allotting such time to each item as its importance requires.

##### 5. *Resolutions which have been defeated in effect by the adoption of another resolution, should not be further discussed or voted on:*

A practice has grown up by which a resolution is debated and pressed to a vote which is in conflict wholly or in part with another resolution upon the same item which has already been adopted. Renewed discussion and a vote on the second resolution is superfluous, since it would be an absurdity for a committee or the plenary to adopt two conflicting resolutions on the same matter. This pro-

cedural problem must be solved by firm chairmanship.

6. *The procedure on points of order needs clarification:*

The Carnegie Endowment memorandum has some useful comments on pages 24 and 25 on the meaning and function of points of order, and it would be desirable if the Assembly were to give directions to Chairmen of Committees on this matter.

In particular, rule 102 could with advantage be amended to make it clear that there shall be no "seconding" on a point of order and no debate upon it, but that the ruling of the Chairman shall be given immediately. A Chairman should never have two or more points of order before him at the same time.

**5. China: Proposed additional rule to be inserted between rules 71 and 72 of the rules of procedure (A/AC.30/5)**

A proposal, rejected by *not less than a two-thirds majority* in a *Committee* of the General Assembly, shall not be introduced in a plenary meeting.

A proposal, rejected by not less than a two-thirds majority in a sub-committee of a Committee, shall not be introduced in a plenary meeting or in a meeting of the parent body of the sub-committee.

**6. Letter dated 23 June 1949 from the delegation of Canada to the Secretary-General (A/AC.30/7)**

New York, 23 June 1949

With reference to the Special Committee on Methods and Procedures of the General Assembly, I have the honour to enclose a memorandum containing proposals by the Canadian delegation, which I would be grateful if you would bring to the attention of the Chairman of this Committee.

(Signed) George IGNATIEFF  
Acting Permanent Representative  
of Canada

PROPOSALS

1. *General Committee:*

Experience has shown that it is difficult for the President of the General Assembly, in his capacity as Chairman of the General Committee, to restrict the discussions in the General Committee to matters which lie within its jurisdiction under rule 35. The present wording of that rule debars the Committee from deciding any political question, but it does not specifically state to what extent the Committee shall or shall not discuss the substance of items proposed for the Assembly's agenda. The Canadian delegation feels that the Chairman of this Committee would be assisted if the following amendment were added at the end of the present rule 35:

"In discussing matters relating to the agenda of the General Assembly, the General Committee shall not discuss the substance of an item except in so far as this bears directly upon the questions

whether or not the General Committee should recommend that the item be included in the agenda and what priority should be accorded to the item."

2. *Nominating committee:*

The General Assembly can economize much time by improving its procedures for the selection of its officers. The Canadian delegation therefore believes that it would be wise to have a nominating committee which would meet in advance of the General Assembly to recommend the nomination of officers of Committees. The main purpose in setting up such a committee would be to ensure the selection at all times of competent and experienced Chairmen for the Main Committees, while at the same time maintaining the principle of equitable geographical distribution. The Canadian delegation therefore proposes the following new rule:

"A Nominating Committee, consisting of representatives of delegations of which the President, Vice-Presidents and the Chairmen of the Main Committees of the previous session of the General Assembly were members, shall meet three days before the opening of each session of the General Assembly for the purpose of suggesting one or more candidates for Chairmen, Vice-Chairmen and Rapporteurs of the Main Committees. The Committee shall present its report to the President of the General Assembly at the opening of the session. The President shall communicate to each Main Committee the suggestions of the Nominating Committee which concern that Committee. These provisions do not affect the right of members to make nominations in the Main Committees or to cast votes for any eligible person."

3. *Elections:*

The Canadian delegation suggests that time might further be saved by simplifying the procedure for elections in plenary meetings of the Assembly. Under the present rule 84 there has to be a time-consuming secret ballot for elections in plenary meetings even though the number of candidates is not greater than the number of seats to be filled. The Canadian delegation therefore suggests that rule 84 be revised to read as follows:

"Nominations shall be submitted in writing to the President and shall be announced by him. There shall be no nomination speeches or oral nominations. If the number of candidates is greater than the number of seats to be filled, the elections shall be by secret ballot. If the number of candidates is not greater than the number of seats to be filled, the President shall declare the candidates elected."

4. *Time limit on procedural points:*

The Canadian delegation believes that a time limit of five minutes should be sufficient for any statement on a procedural motion which is debatable under the present rules. The Canadian delegation proposes that the rules of procedure be amended to authorize the President of the Assembly and the Chairmen of the Committees to limit such statements to a period of five minutes. The Canadian delegation suggests that this could be accomplished by making a short amendment in rules 67 and 68 and in rules 105 and 106.

5. *Rule on suspension of the rules:*

Under Article 21 of the Charter, the Gener



Assembly is the master of its own rules of procedure. While rule 152 of the rules of procedure provides for the amendment of the rules there is no specific rule governing suspension. It would save the time of the Assembly if there were a clear provision for the suspension of the rules of procedure. The inclusion of such a rule would, by clarifying the position, render debate on this question unnecessary. Moreover, it would tend to increase respect for the rules of procedure and thus lead to a saving of time.

It is accordingly suggested that it would be useful to include a new rule (in chapter XVII of the rules of procedure) which would impose a self-denying ordinance on the Assembly as far as the suspension of its rules is concerned. The new rule might provide that a rule of procedure shall not be suspended, nor shall the President put to a vote a motion for the suspension of any rule unless: (a) the motion has been submitted in writing to the Secretary-General; and (b) copies of the motion have been distributed to all the delegations represented in the Assembly at least forty-eight hours before the motion for suspension is put to the vote.

If the motion for suspension had been submitted and distributed in this matter, it could be adopted by a majority of the Members of the Assembly present and voting.

It may be worth noting that most national legislative bodies, though masters of their own procedures, have adopted self-denying ordinances of this type, designed to promote respect for, and observance of, their standing orders, which correspond to rules of procedure.

The position with respect to procedure in Committees of the General Assembly is somewhat different from the position in the plenary meetings of the Assembly. Committees of the Assembly have wisely not been given the authority to amend the Assembly's rules of procedure in so far as they are applicable to such Committees. If they have not the power to amend, the Committees should certainly not have the power to suspend. If a Committee considers the suspension of a rule to be necessary, the General Assembly should be asked to suspend it. The sense of this paragraph, if acceptable to the Special Committee, might usefully be included in its report.

## **7. Note verbale dated 27 June 1949 from the New Zealand delegation to the Secretary-General of the United Nations (A/AC.30/8)**

New York, 27 June 1949

The permanent delegate of New Zealand presents his compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to refer to the Secretary-General's note SG.343/01/RS of 12 May 1949 concerning the Special Committee on Methods and Procedures of the General Assembly.

The permanent delegate has now been instructed by the New Zealand Government to submit the following proposals and suggestions with respect to methods and procedures which would enable the General Assembly and its Committees to discharge their functions more effectively and expeditiously.

1. The General Committee should use greater

discrimination in recommending to the General Assembly acceptance or rejection of items for the final agenda of the session. Different treatment should be accorded to the three classes of items recognized in the rules, namely, items submitted in time for inclusion in the provisional agenda, supplementary items and additional items, in order to guarantee to Members of the United Nations their rights under the Charter. The General Committee should recommend the inclusion in the final agenda of items in the provisional agenda, unless there are special reasons to the contrary. The General Committee should use full discretion as regards items on the supplementary list, and should recommend acceptance or rejection according to its view of the urgency and importance of the matter, the pressure on the agenda and other relevant factors (rejection, of course, normally means only postponement, if the sponsoring country includes the item on the provisional agenda at the following session). As regards additional items, the General Committee should recommend rejection unless it is fully satisfied as to the urgency and importance of the matter. A two-thirds majority of the Assembly should be required to admit additional items to the agenda, and rule 14 of the rules of procedure amended accordingly.

2. Rule 103 should be so amended as to impose in Committees a time-limit of thirty minutes for a first speech and ten minutes for a subsequent speech by the same delegation on any item of the agenda, without prejudice to the right of a Committee to decide upon lower limits in its discretion. With the consent of a majority of the Committee, but without debate, the speaker's time could be successively extended for a further period or periods of the same duration.

3. A faulty practice has arisen, where items are referred to sub-committees, of voting in Committee on all the proposals considered in sub-committee, whether or not the sub-committee adopted them. Committees should vote only on the majority recommendations contained in sub-committees' reports.

4. Rule 59, which has been neglected in practice, should be observed.

5. A study should be made of the practicability of adopting a mechanical system by which the votes of all delegations could be recorded simultaneously. However, for the final voting on an item, whether in Committee or in plenary meeting, a roll-call vote should be permitted if asked for.

6. Nominations for elections should be permitted in plenary meetings as well as in Committees, and rule 84 should be amended accordingly.

7. The New Zealand Government feels that the causes of the inefficient operation of the Assembly do not lie principally in the rules and cannot be wholly remedied by improving them. However, the adoption of certain useful amendments to the rules, and a strong endorsement by the Assembly of certain practical suggestions for the guidance of the presiding officers of the Assembly and its Committees may assist these officers in the discharge of their difficult task and thus go far to achieve the object of the Special Committee on Methods and Procedures.

The permanent delegate regrets the delay which has occurred in submitting these suggestions to the Secretary-General.



**8. Note verbale dated 24 June 1949 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Commonwealth Relations of Pakistan to the Secretary-General of the United Nations (A/AC.30/9)**

Karachi, 24 June 1949

The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Commonwealth Relations presents his compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to refer to his note No. SG.343/01/RS dated 11 May 1949, concerning methods and procedures which would enable the General Assembly and its Committees to discharge their duties more effectively and expeditiously.

1. The Government of Pakistan are of the opinion that the fixation of a target date for the termination of the session or of a tentative schedule with target dates for each item by Committees is not likely to yield any result. Nor do they consider that any useful purpose would be served by amending rule 98 (quorum) or rule 103 (time-limit on speeches) of the General Assembly, as suggested by the delegations of Norway, Denmark and Sweden. In the experience of Pakistan Delegations to the General Assembly, attempts made by the Chairmen or members of Committees to shorten debates as a rule result in more time being wasted in unnecessary debates that follow, while ultimately the speakers almost invariably succeed in having their own way.

2. The Government of Pakistan believe that the only practical way of saving time is to reduce the number of proposed items on the agenda to the minimum, say not exceeding a total of fifty, that is to say, to retain those which are really important and urgent and to relegate the rest to the next session or to refer them to the other organs of the United Nations for detailed examination and report. In order further to save time, provision may be made, as suggested by the Danish, Norwegian and Swedish delegations, for the proposed items to be accompanied by draft resolutions or by a detailed memorandum stating objects and reasons. This would reduce the quantity of work and improve the quality.

3. The Government of Pakistan also consider that the last-minute inclusion in the General Assembly agenda of items proposed by other organs of the United Nations should, as far as possible, be avoided. For instance, the Economic and Social Council usually holds a session immediately before the regular sessions of the General Assembly and many of the items considered by the Council at these sessions are referred to the General Assembly. The result is that countries which are not members of the Council or which are situated at a distance from the Headquarters of the United Nations find it difficult to brief their delegations properly. The delegations are consequently not fully ready to discuss such items, and this inevitably results in delays in their disposal.

4. The Government of Pakistan fully support the suggestion that meetings should be called to order at the scheduled time.

**9. United Kingdom: Proposal for an agenda committee (A/AC.30/10)**

The United Kingdom proposes that the following rules be inserted after rule 13 in the General Assembly rules of procedure:

*Rule 13 (a)*

At each regular session the General Assembly shall appoint an Agenda Committee composed of fifteen members, including China, France, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, chosen in such a way as to ensure the representative character of the Committee. The Agenda Committee shall meet not less than three weeks before the opening of the next regular session and shall be dissolved on or before the opening of the session.

*Rule 13 (b)*

The Agenda Committee shall consider the provisional agenda, together with the supplementary list, and shall make recommendations to the General Assembly concerning the inclusion, non-inclusion or postponement of each item, the priority to be given to consideration of particular items, and an estimated date for the conclusion of the session. It shall not, however, decide any political question.

*Rule 13 (c)*

A Member of the United Nations which is not represented on the Agenda Committee, and which has proposed an item, shall be entitled to attend any meeting at which that item is discussed and to participate without vote in the discussion.

**10. United States of America: Proposal for new rule to replace the recommendation contained in paragraph 12 of the Preliminary Report<sup>3</sup>**

Each Main Committee, in the light of the target date adopted by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the General Committee, shall fix its own priorities and provide for the meetings necessary to accomplish its business on schedule.

**11. United States of America: Proposals (A/AC.30/12)**

**I. PROPOSAL FOR A NEW RULE TO BE INSERTED IMMEDIATELY AFTER PARAGRAPH 18 OF THE PRELIMINARY REPORT.<sup>4</sup>**

The General Committee shall meet from time to time throughout each session to review the progress of the General Assembly and of its committees, and the General Committee shall be convened by the President at such times as he deems necessary, or upon the written request of any five members of the General Committee.

**II. PROPOSAL FOR A NEW RULE TO BE INSERTED IMMEDIATELY AFTER PARAGRAPH 22 OF THE PRELIMINARY REPORT.<sup>4</sup>**

Debate on the inclusion of an item in the agenda, when that item has been recommended for inclu-

<sup>3</sup>See documents A/AC.30/W.11 and A/AC.30/11.

<sup>4</sup>See document A/AC.30/W.11.

sion by the General Committee, shall be limited to not more than three speakers on each side of the question, a maximum of ten minutes being allowed to each speaker.

## 12. Letter dated 14 June 1949 to the Chairman of the Special Committee from the Secretary-General (A/AC.30/6)

Lake Success, 14 June 1949

I have the honour to request that the following draft rule of procedure should be submitted for consideration by the Special Committee on Methods and Procedures of the General Assembly:

### XI. PLENARY MEETINGS

#### Conduct of business

#### NEW RULE TO BE INSERTED BEFORE RULE 57

##### *Minute of silent prayer and meditation*

"Immediately after the opening of the first plenary meeting held by the General Assembly on a given day, the President shall invite representatives to observe one minute of silence dedicated to prayer and meditation."

The reasons which prompt me to make this proposal are stated in the attached memorandum. I feel confident that the Committee, in examining the proposal, will give full recognition to the lofty motives which have inspired those who have repeatedly urged the United Nations to devote time to reflection on the spiritual aims of the Organization.

(Signed) Trygve LIE  
Secretary-General

### PROPOSAL BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR AN INTERVAL OF PRAYER AND MEDITATION IN THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The Secretary-General has received many hundreds of letters from individuals and organizations urging the introduction of prayer in the meetings of the General Assembly. He has had numerous discussions in this regard with representatives from Member nations and with interested outside persons. In consequence, the Secretary-General proposes that the Special Committee on Methods and Procedures of the General Assembly should consider the question of introducing in meetings of the General Assembly an interval for prayer and meditation.

The application of this proposal would be as follows: in the first plenary meeting of the General Assembly on a given day the President, after calling the General Assembly to order, would then announce: "The Assembly will remain silent for one minute, which is dedicated to prayer and meditation."

Since the Members of the United Nations represent people belonging to nearly every religion, creed and philosophical outlook in the world it would not be possible to introduce a public prayer which could satisfy all tenets and give offence to none. On the other hand, the United Nations is dedicated to the fulfilment of the great ideals of peace and justice. It is fitting that an opportunity should be given to symbolize these spiritual aims. The interval of prayer and meditation which the Secretary-General proposes would not impose any form of prayer on any individual or nation. It would give to each one a moment in the midst of the affairs of the United Nations in which to address himself towards spiritual matters in accordance with his own beliefs.

For similar reasons the Secretary-General has also proposed to the Advisory Committee on Headquarters the construction at the permanent headquarters of a special room for prayer and meditation.

## Annex II

### MECHANICAL AND TECHNICAL DEVICES

#### MEMORANDUM BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

In accordance with the request made by the Special Committee during its ninth meeting, the possibilities of installing various mechanical devices, the introduction of which might economize the time of the General Assembly, have been explored in detail, and the results of this research are set forth below.

#### 1. ELECTRICAL VOTING EQUIPMENT

##### (a) General description

This is the device which appears to have the greatest time-saving potentialities of those studied.

The equipment provides a means for taking votes of all kinds with great speed and accuracy. A set of electrical buttons or switches, marked "Yes", "No" and "Abstain", is provided at the desk of each delegation, and a central control panel is provided at the desk of the presiding officer. When a vote is to be taken, the presiding officer first announces that voting will take place. He then switches on the power to the whole automatic voting system, by depressing a button on his desk. A sign, visible to everyone present, indicates that voting is taking place. The representatives vote by depressing the appropriate button in front of them, and after a short period of perhaps half a minute, the presiding officer announces that the voting has taken place. He then switches on the automatic counting system, which takes approxi-

mately twenty-five seconds to show the totals under "Yes", "No", "Abstain" and "Absent". Therefore, the total voting time takes less than one minute.

For roll-call voting, a large lighted board is provided in clear view, and the votes of the delegations are indicated on it individually. This board is used only when it is desired to show how each Member voted. Otherwise, the votes appear on a result indicator, showing the total votes under "Yes", "No", "Abstain" and "Absent". An automatic recorder is also part of the system, furnishing exact reproduction of the votes cast, for later use as required.

The mechanical reliability of the system is extremely high, and it has received extensive testing in various important parliamentary bodies. Its adaptability is excellent, and it can be used for various purposes other than voting. For example, the representatives may press a button to indicate their wish to speak, and it is possible to determine

easily the number of delegations present at any given time. A locking device can be installed over the voting buttons to prevent their misuse, and the system can be adapted to ensure secrecy in voting when desired.

#### (b) Gain in time

A survey had been made of the number of votes taken during the third session of the General Assembly, including both the first and second parts. The results of this survey, which covers the plenary meetings and the meetings of the Main Committees, are shown below. Secret ballots, which totalled thirty-four during the session, are not included in the tabulation, since it may not be desired to use the mechanical system for this purpose. If it should be decided to use electrical voting for secret balloting, additional time can be saved. The voting process, using electrical equipment, requires slightly less than one minute, regardless of the type of vote.

TABLE SHOWING HOURS AND MINUTES REQUIRED FOR VOTING  
during both parts of the third regular session of the General Assembly

	Show of hands (2 minutes per vote)	Roll-call (5 minutes per vote)	Total elapsed time	Time required for electrical voting (1 minute per vote)	Possible saving
PART I					
Plenary meetings .....	3:08	4:40	7:48	2:30	5:18
First Committee .....	5:10	4:50	10:00	3:33	6:27
<i>Ad Hoc</i> Political Committee .....	0:58	0:45	1:43	0:38	1:05
Second Committee .....	1:12	0:25	1:37	0:41	0:56
Third Committee .....	14:00	6:20	20:20	8:16	12:04
Fourth Committee .....	1:40	2:20	4:00	1:18	2:42
Fifth Committee .....	5:10	1:55	7:05	2:58	4:07
Sixth Committee .....	4:52	1:50	6:42	2:48	3:54
Joint Second and Third Committees .....	0:18	0:10	0:28	0:11	0:17
PART II					
Plenary meetings .....	1:08	2:15	3:23	1:01	2:22
First Committee .....	0:40	3:45	4:25	1:05	3:20
<i>Ad Hoc</i> Political Committee .....	0:26	0:20	0:46	0:17	0:29
Third Committee .....	7:16	1:45	9:01	3:59	5:02
Fifth Committee .....	0:02	0:15	0:17	0:04	0:13
GRAND TOTALS .....	46:00	31:35	77:35	29:19	48:16

#### (c) Cost of installations

The cost of installing electrical voting equipment in the new Headquarters could be estimated approximately as follows:

	\$
General Assembly Hall .....	55,200
Four Conference Rooms at \$54,000 each ..	216,000
TOTAL .....	271,200

The cost of similar installations at Flushing and Lake Success would be approximately the same. However, it should be noted that about \$40,000 worth of materials, including items such as cables and conduits, could not be salvaged upon the removal to the new Headquarters. Further, there is serious doubt whether the large voting panels suitable for Flushing and Lake Success installation could be used in Manhattan, and these would rep-

resent a very large investment. There is also the major consideration of time required for purchase and installation and the question of desirability of installation at Flushing or Lake Success for such a brief period before occupancy of the new building.

#### 2. TIME LIMIT CONTROL

##### (a) General description

When it is decided to limit the amount of time granted to speakers, it is possible to provide mechanical means for indicating to all concerned that the time-limit has been reached. The most practicable equipment for this purpose consists of a large mechanical clock with a sweep-hand and signal (buzzer, bell or light), placed in clear view in the room. When a speech begins, the clock is set for a specific time-limit. The sweep-hand

indicates the use of time within that limit, enabling the speaker to pace himself. A warning signal, either auditory or visual, is given at the end of the period.

#### (b) *Gain in time*

The amount of time to be saved through use of this device will depend upon the time-limit imposed and the extent to which it is actually utilized. For example, if a time-limit of thirty minutes had been imposed upon all speeches during the plenary meetings of the first part of the third session of the General Assembly, about eight hours of time would have been saved, or, for meetings of the First Committee, about fourteen hours would have been saved.

#### (c) *Cost of installation*

Present plans call for the installation of large mechanical clocks in the plenary hall and all conference rooms at the new Headquarters. The clocks can be equipped with sweep-hands and signal for about \$250 per clock.

Installations of such completely equipped clocks in the rooms presently used would cost about \$1,500 per clock.

### 3. WARNING SYSTEMS

#### (a) *General description*

The possibilities of installing a system of lights or buzzers in order to warn representatives that meetings are about to begin and that voting is about to take place were thoroughly studied. A buzzer system, which is used for warning representatives that meetings are about to begin, already exists in the Delegates' Lounge at Flushing.

An alternative system of signal lights, which could indicate to representatives both that meetings are about to commence and that voting is about to take place, can be installed at Flushing and Lake Success. The simplest and most effective system at Flushing would result from the installation of sets of two lights at various strategic points. The two lights at each point would be of different colours, with one colour indicating that a meeting was about to begin and the other that voting was about to take place. The lights would be controlled from the desk of a Secretariat official in the General Assembly Hall. Lights could be installed at the following locations: Delegates' Lounge, Delegates' Writing Room, Delegates'

Lobby, Delegates' Dining Room, Cafeteria, and in the corridors on each side of the General Assembly Hall.

At Lake Success, similar lights could be used for the same purposes. Sets of such lights could be installed in the ceiling of the corridor outside Conference Rooms 1, 2, 3 and 4. Each set of lights would be controlled from a Secretariat official's desk in the adjacent conference room. Two signal panels would be installed in the Delegates' Lounge, and these would each contain a set of lights for each conference room, controlled by Secretariat officials in the four rooms.

Similar installations can, of course, be made at the new Headquarters.

#### (b) *Gain in time*

Certain savings in time could be achieved, as representatives would be apprised more quickly and effectively of the fact that meetings were about to start or that votes were about to be taken. Experience during the third session of the General Assembly indicated that meetings commenced about twenty minutes late, on the average. Regular use of this system could somewhat reduce that amount of lost time.

#### (c) *Cost of installations*

It is estimated that the installations described for Flushing would cost about \$1,600. The approximate cost of the Lake Success installations would be \$1,200.

### 4. OTHER DEVICES

The Secretariat is constantly experimenting with mechanical devices which will improve its services and will thereby facilitate the work of the General Assembly. The system of simultaneous interpretation is being constantly improved and it will be extended as circumstances make such extension possible. Improvements are also being made in systems used for providing records of meetings and in the reproduction and distribution of documents, in order that the greatest possible speed and accuracy may be assured. There are numerous mechanical and automatic devices which are used by the Secretariat and which in the long run have their effect upon the duration of meetings, but a direct relationship would be difficult to demonstrate without giving a lengthy and detailed explanation.