



General Assembly

Seventieth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
5 November 2015

Original: English

Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 8th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 21 October 2015, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Bhattarai (Nepal)
*Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative
and Budgetary Questions:* Mr. Ruiz Massieu
later: Mr. Sene

Contents

Agenda item 137: Pattern of conferences

Agenda item 134: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017
(*continued*)

International Trade Centre

Agenda item 135: Programme planning (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be sent as soon as possible, under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, to the Chief of the Documents Control Unit (srcorrections@un.org), and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org/>).

15-18313 (E)



Please recycle A small recycling symbol consisting of three chasing arrows forming a triangle.



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

Agenda item 137: Pattern of conferences (A/70/32; A/70/122; A/70/432)

1. **Mr. Scappini Ricciardi** (Chair of the Committee on Conferences), introducing the report of the Committee on Conferences for 2015 (A/70/32), said that the report contained a draft resolution on the pattern of conferences and a draft calendar of conferences and meetings of the United Nations for 2016 and 2017, which were recommended for adoption by the General Assembly. The Committee on Conferences had considered the report of the Secretary-General on the pattern of conferences (A/70/122) together with the statistical data presented as supplementary information. The report of the Committee on Conferences offered a comprehensive summary of the discussions held on all items on its agenda. The annual substantive session of that Committee offered Member States an opportunity to engage with the management of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management on all matters relating to conference and documentation services with a view to providing direction, guidance and support to the Secretariat in carrying out its mandates.

2. The Committee on Conferences, which now had its full membership, had reviewed the statistical data on the utilization of conference-servicing resources and facilities at the four main duty stations and at the conference centre of the Economic Commission for Africa. In addition, he had reported on his mandate to hold consultations with those intergovernmental bodies whose utilization factor had fallen below the 80 per cent benchmark over the previous three consecutive years, from 2012 to 2014. His predecessor, Ms. Smolic (Uruguay), had met with the presiding officers of four New York-based bodies and had sent a letter to the President of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL), based in Vienna, outlining possible measures to improve their respective utilization factors. She had also met with the Chairs of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and its Working Group, the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization, and the Committee on Information, and with the President of the Executive

Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

3. The Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and its Working Group had made considerable efforts prior to its 2014 and 2015 sessions and, as a result, had improved its utilization factor from 45 per cent in 2012 and 51 per cent in 2013 to 79 per cent in 2014 and 83 per cent in 2015. The Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization had improved its utilization factor from 41 per cent in 2012 and 52 per cent in 2013 to 48 per cent in 2014 and 91 per cent in 2015. The Committee on Information had agreed to make greater efforts to adjust its programme of work according to its need for formal sessions and to do more to anticipate the periods when interpretation would not be required.

4. With a view to making the Bureau of the UNICEF Executive Board more aware of the need to use services allocated to it more efficiently, the President of the Board had agreed to raise with its Bureau the matter of a long-standing pattern of cancelling the last meeting of each session on short notice. The previous Chair of the Committee on Conferences had written to the Chair of UNCITRAL before its 2015 session suggesting specific measures to improve its utilization. As a result, UNCITRAL had achieved a utilization factor of 92 per cent in 2015 compared to 76 per cent in 2012, 77 per cent in 2013 and 62 per cent in 2014.

5. In response to General Assembly resolution 66/233, the Committee secretariat had again provided utilization reports to the secretariats of all calendar bodies before and immediately after each scheduled session, including those that had consistently underutilized conference resources over the previous 10 years, and had made suggestions on how to improve their utilization factor, taking into account client feedback that had actively been sought.

6. The Committee on Conferences had expressed concern at the pace of improvements to the conference centre of the Economic Commission for Africa and had requested the Secretary-General to ensure the timely completion of work, particularly on Africa Hall. The Committee on Conferences noted that, with as far as conference services were concerned, the capital master plan had been successfully completed. However, it re-emphasized the need for continued improvement of

the videoconferencing infrastructure at all four duty stations and at the regional commissions. It also requested the Secretary-General to continue addressing issues related to the accessibility of conference facilities as a matter of priority.

7. On integrated global management, the draft resolution in the report of the Committee on Conferences requested the Secretary-General to complete internal reviews concerning accountability mechanisms and the clear delineation of responsibility between the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management and the Directors-General of the United Nations Offices at Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi for conference management policies, operations and resource utilization. It also requested the Secretary-General to continue to seek ways to promote workload-sharing among the four main duty stations.

8. Concerning documentation and publication-related matters, the Committee on Conferences had discussed digitization of older United Nations documents and the Department of Public Information had provided information on the criteria for selection of documents, the technology used and the expertise required for that task. The draft resolution requested the Secretary-General to present a proposal for the digitization of older important United Nations documents for consideration by the General Assembly no later than at the main part of its seventy-first session, outlining, *inter alia*, the definition of important older United Nations documents, as well as the scope and estimated quantity, cost and time frame. It also requested the Secretary-General to seek additional voluntary contributions for the digitization.

9. On translation and interpretation, the Committee on Conferences requested the Secretary-General to make further concerted efforts to promote outreach through, *inter alia*, traineeships and internships, and to introduce innovative methods to increase awareness of the programmes, including through partnerships with Member States, relevant international organizations and language institutions in all regions, in particular in Africa and Latin America. It also requested the Secretary-General to continue making every effort to enhance access to competitive examinations for applicants in all regions by, where possible, bringing examination sites closer to their locations to allow the greatest number of potentially qualified candidates to participate in them. In addition, it reiterated its request

to the Secretary-General to provide adequate staff at the appropriate level at all duty stations with a view to ensuring appropriate quality control of contractual translations, with due consideration of the principle of equal grade for equal work.

10. **Mr. Gettu** (Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the pattern of conferences (A/70/122), said that, overall, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management had made tremendous progress through internal improvements, advance planning, management changes, focused activities in critical areas, prioritization and efficiency gains. Despite the increase in the number of meetings, the Department had continued to provide high-quality conference services to Member States, which had included technical secretariat services and procedural support, as well as the entire spectrum of conference management and language services.

11. The Department had jointly organized and serviced the main events of the high-level segment of the seventieth session of the General Assembly and had serviced the high-level meeting of the Security Council held the same week. Between 25 September and 3 October 2015, the Department had serviced 1,687 bilateral meetings compared with 1,396 in 2014 and 1,235 in 2013, which reflected an increase of 21 per cent and 37 per cent, respectively, during the high-level periods of the General Assembly over the previous three years. To accommodate all the bilateral meetings, 40 temporary booths had been provided and 24 rooms had been used for the regular meetings.

12. The Interpretation Service had ensured that all high-level meetings that had requested interpretation were successfully covered in all official languages. The Department had anticipated a surge in demand for interpretation capacity and had planned with potential excess capacity. The utilization rate was 93 per cent and all interpreters had worked over weekends. International sign language interpretation had been provided for the summit proceedings at the request of the President of the General Assembly, which had been made on short notice. Nearly all morning meetings of the general debate had continued well beyond 1 p.m. and several beyond 3 p.m., meaning that afternoon meetings themselves had been delayed. Staff in the Department had serviced meetings, translated documents and provided interpretation from 9 a.m. to

beyond 10 p.m. so as to accommodate speakers, in particular Heads of State and Government.

13. Over the previous three sessions of the General Assembly, there had been a marked rise in the number of meetings and events programmed during the high-level period. For the sixty-seventh session 219 meetings had been programmed compared to 326 for the sixty-eighth session and 402 for the sixty-ninth session, which reflected an increase of 84 per cent in the services provided. For the seventieth session, there had been a further increase in the demand for meetings and events.

14. In the four months leading up to and including the general debate, from 1 June to 30 September 2015, the Documentation Division had translated a total of 44.3 million words, which was 17 per cent more than in the same period of 2014. In preparation for the seventieth session, 328 reports had been slotted for processing in New York for consideration by the plenary Assembly and its Main Committees. As at 12 October 2015, the Department had received 304 documents for processing, totalling 3,408,650 words. Of those, 205 were reports of the Secretary-General and 99 were non-Secretariat reports. Overall, 257 of the 304 manuscripts received had been submitted by authors in accordance with the agreed submission deadlines, for a compliance rate of 85 per cent. Of those 304 manuscripts, 280 had been translated and issued by the Department in all official languages before the respective consideration dates, while 223 of them, or 80 per cent, had been issued at least six weeks before their consideration date. Of the 205 reports of the Secretary-General, 40 had exceeded the word limit, resulting in an excess of 475,083 words. Of the 99 non-Secretariat reports, 40 had exceeded the word limit, resulting in an excess of 773,284 words. There was clearly a need for more concise drafting and fewer exceptions to the word limit.

15. Many author departments had sought exceptions to the word limits and the Department periodically reminded all author entities to strictly adhere to the slotting schedule, avoid excessive length and refrain from surprise requests. It was working to enforce stricter compliance with the relevant rules, starting from the current slotting exercise for 2016, and intended to reduce waivers authorizing departures from mandated timelines and word limits.

16. In addition to meetings, documentation and other related services, the Department provided secretariat support to a wide range of intergovernmental bodies, including the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council and most of their subsidiary bodies, as well as their respective Chairs and Presidents. It also provided technical, procedural and substantive support to the meetings of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly, which met during the resumed part of every session.

17. To improve the timeliness of documentation for the Fifth Committee, the Department was following a multi-stakeholder approach, which meant that all stages of a document's life cycle were coordinated by the Department with the main author entities and the secretariats of the Fifth Committee and the Advisory Committee. Earlier submission of manuscripts to the Department would help to gain precious processing time and would result in more timely availability of reports to facilitate deliberations. However, the Department foresaw extremely late issuance of Fifth Committee documents in December 2015 as a result of systemic issues, including the fact that the Human Rights Council remained in session until early October. Council resolutions were analysed by the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts, which then issued statements of programme budget implications. Consequently, the report would be large and late. However, the Department was negotiating with the Department of Management to advance the submission of some documents.

18. Cooperation between the Department and the Advisory Committee was excellent. However, the timing of Advisory Committee reports was unpredictable and it was nearly impossible for the Department to plan capacity for them. Instead, the reports had to be treated as extremely urgent jobs whenever they arrived. Although the Department had turned them around in an average of 2.5 days during the main part of the sixty-ninth session, that fire-fighting mode of working was unsustainable and should not be considered the norm.

19. Concerning meetings management, the utilization factor of the conference-servicing resources provided to hold parliamentary meetings at the four duty stations had risen from 82 per cent in 2013 to 86 per cent in 2014. Over the previous year, the Department had actively sought the cooperation and depended on the disciplined approach of presiding officers in its efforts

to increase the utilization factor, and the positive response by the client bodies had helped to achieve those encouraging results. In 2014, fewer meetings had been cancelled and less time had been lost owing to late starts and the early conclusion of meetings. Unused interpretation resources from cancelled meetings had also been reassigned at a higher rate.

20. The reassignment of interpretation teams from cancelled meetings to other meetings in New York had supported, in part, the provision of interpretation services to meetings of bodies entitled to meet “as required”. In New York in 2014, 1,075 “as required” meetings had received interpretation services, which was 97 per cent of the requests received. That was despite the large increase each year in the number of requests received, and services were being provided without any increase in resources. The number of “as required” meetings provided with interpretation in 2014 had risen by 20 per cent, mainly owing to an increase in Security Council meetings. The Fifth Committee had added 37 meetings with interpretation to its programme during the main part of the sixty-ninth session, compared with only five in 2013, while the Advisory Committee had added 24 meetings with interpretation in 2014, compared with 18 in 2013.

21. Performance in terms of timely issuance of documents continued to improve. In 2014, more than 98 per cent of the documents submitted on time and within the word limits had been processed in a timely manner by the Department in New York. As a result, 75 per cent of all pre-session documents in New York had been issued within the mandated time frame, up from 71 per cent in 2013.

22. The Department was facing a very challenging year in 2015 and, during the period from 1 January to 12 October 2015, its workload had increased by 23 per cent compared to the same period of 2013. In addition, 2015 was one of the years in which the Fifth Committee took up three key items together: the scale of assessments, the regular budget and the financing of peacekeeping operations. The Department was now also actively addressing challenges relating to the simultaneous issuance of documentation in the mandated languages in Geneva, the second largest conference operation funded through section 2 of the budget.

23. The Department had experienced an increase in the expected and unexpected documentation workload,

which it had been absorbing through the fine-tuning of managerial practices and efficient use of the resources at its disposal. However, after the proposed reductions in the budget for 2016-2017, further increases could become difficult to absorb. In addition, its translation capacity continued to be limited by shortages of qualified professionals in certain language combinations. It was against that backdrop that the Department was making an extra effort to ensure the timely delivery of high-quality services.

24. To ensure that document processing and meetings management were supported in the best way possible within its resources, the Department had invested in a series of initiatives to enhance succession planning, implement global information technology projects, streamline business models and harmonize workflow processes. All those strategic areas of work represented the substance of the integrated global management of the conference services located in New York and the other three main duty stations. Measures had been taken to increase the yield from the language competitive examinations, including outreach to potential candidates through the network of universities and training institutions that had signed memorandums of understanding with the Department; extensive use of social media to publicize the examinations; identification of those candidates who had narrowly missed the pass mark and who could be recruited for temporary assistance and as trainees; and the piloting in June-July 2015 of computer-based examinations for English translators and English editors.

25. To expand the pool of language professionals available for recruitment as temporary assistance or as external contractors, the Department was reaching out to professional bodies for translators and to organizations such as the International Organization of la Francophonie to identify credentialled language practitioners. The Department continued to assist in the training of university students and, given the acute shortage of French translators in particular, it was proposed that a senior French reviser should be sent on a six-week training course to the University of Buea in Cameroon, to conduct training workshops and later to identify through testing potential candidates for traineeships at Headquarters. That initiative, as well as a programme for the training of Spanish translators prepared in collaboration with Cuba, was designed to help close the wide gap in Africa and Latin America in

order to tap into the potential of those regions as sources of qualified language professionals for the Department.

26. The Department was considering a proposal to outpost to the United Nations Office at Vienna a number of staff of the French Translation Service at Headquarters, which had traditionally had a high vacancy rate due to high turnover and the preference of French-language translators to be stationed in Europe rather than New York. The advantages of outposting would include lower staff costs due to lower post-adjustment rates, overnight processing taking advantage of the time difference between New York and Vienna, increased opportunities for geographical mobility for staff of the Service, and an opportunity to gain management experience for the reviser who would supervise the outposted staff.

27. To ensure the gradual rejuvenation of the pools of conference interpreters, an in-house training programme for Arabic interpreters had been conducted and a similar programme for French interpreters was being developed. Other sections of the Interpretation Service reached their succession planning goals through the training of interns and outreach to external interpretation schools and interpreters' associations.

28. Conference management software was an integral part of the Department's conference management operations, and it was used to plan meetings, schedule interpreter assignments, process and plan electronic document production, conduct terminology work, produce computer-assisted translations and provide management reporting. In the biennium 2016-2017, those systems would continue to be maintained and enhanced. In addition, fit-gap analysis between those systems and enterprise solutions would be conducted to ensure alignment with the information and communications technology (ICT) strategy approved by the General Assembly, which was geared towards the defragmentation and centralization of information technology resources Secretariat-wide. The Department was working to implement the ICT strategy, including the harmonization of applications and the standardization of technology used in gMeets, gDoc, gText and gData, to ensure the compatibility of technologies and architecture of applications, bearing in mind usability, accessibility and multilingualism.

29. In March 2015, a steering group comprising senior managers from the four duty stations had been

established with the aim of optimizing the Department's document-processing chain and conference-servicing arrangements by reviewing structures, work processes and information technology systems across all duty stations. The ultimate goal was an optimized workflow in the processing of parliamentary documentation, but the steering group was also reviewing contractual translation operations following the Department's decision to establish a common roster of external contractors to which managers at all four duty stations now had access. A common information technology tool, the Contractor Management Application, would be used to manage all aspects of the workflow involving external contractors. In addition, a common methodology for performing quality control of contractual output across duty stations was being developed, as were common criteria for the inclusion and removal of contractors from the roster.

30. The quality of the Department's outputs remained a top priority and was assured by rigorous standards for the selection of both in-house and freelance staff. Less experienced language professionals were mentored by more experienced staff and their work was always subject to revision. The Department regularly solicited feedback from Member States on the quality of its outputs through the annual language-specific informational meetings and the annual e-survey of users of its language services. Feedback received from the survey indicated that Member States regarded the overall quality of conference services provided by the Department as "good" or "very good", although, admittedly, the response rate was low. Even with its proactive measures in the areas of outreach and training, however, delays in a single language might still delay the simultaneous issuance of mandated documentation in all the official languages, and the shortage of sufficient numbers of French translators in New York remained a challenge.

31. His appointment as the new Secretariat-wide Coordinator of Multilingualism should help to better organize collective work in that area. Multilingualism was a core value of the Organization and it entailed the active involvement and commitment of all stakeholders. He would therefore initiate consultations with multiple stakeholders and the Department would do its best with the human resources available to it.

32. **Mr. Ruiz Massieu** (Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary

Questions), introducing the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/70/432), said that the report covered issues relating to meetings management, integrated global management, documentation and publications, and translation and interpretation.

33. On meetings management, the Advisory Committee noted that the overall utilization factor for meetings with interpretation of a core sample of bodies that met in the four duty stations had improved to 86 per cent and reiterated that information on utilization factors should include data based on actual occupancy against total capacity.

34. Concerning matters related to documentation and publication, the report contained the comments of the Advisory Committee on multilingualism and digitization, including the need to expedite the process of digitization of important older United Nations documents, as requested by the General Assembly. On translation and interpretation, the Advisory Committee noted that the language services continued to have high vacancy rates and recommended that the General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to provide a concrete proposal to address the vacancy situation and succession planning, particularly in the French Translation Service at Headquarters.

35. **Mr. Davidson** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group welcomed the draft resolution on the pattern of conferences, which provided an excellent basis for negotiations on that agenda item. The Group attached great importance to the effective delivery of quality conference services in line with the equal treatment of the six official languages of the United Nations, especially in support of the work of the intergovernmental and expert bodies of the United Nations. Issues such as the utilization of conference services, documentation and publication-related matters, translation and interpretation matters, as well as the calendar of conferences and meetings were crucial to the effective and efficient functioning of the Organization and the deliberations of the intergovernmental bodies.

36. The Group noted with appreciation that the overall utilization factor for meetings with interpretation of a core sample of bodies in the four duty stations had increased by 4 per cent to 86 per cent, which was above the benchmark of 80 per cent. It also welcomed the steps taken by those bodies that had

adjusted their programmes of work in order to achieve the optimum utilization of conference-servicing resources and encouraged continued efforts in that regard.

37. The Group further noted the near-completion of the capital master plan project and stressed the need for completion of the remaining work, including rectification of the errors and omissions identified by Member States relating to physical and technological accessibilities, power sockets and videoconferencing infrastructure. It also encouraged the continued improvement of the remaining facilities including the printing unit in the basement of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library.

38. On integrated global management, the Group welcomed the cooperation among the main duty stations in the delineation of their responsibilities concerning conference management policies, operations and resource utilization. The Secretary-General should expedite the process of revising the related bulletins that defined the organization of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management and of the Offices.

39. Concerning documentation and publications, efforts were needed to ensure timely issuance of documents and to improve the quality of documentation in order to facilitate effective and efficient deliberations of the Fifth Committee and other intergovernmental bodies. The Group noted with satisfaction that 98.5 per cent of the documents submitted on time and within the word limit had been processed within four weeks by the Department, and stressed that all other duty stations should take measures to reach their targets.

40. It was important to ensure quality translation and interpretation in the six official languages to facilitate the smooth deliberations of Member States in intergovernmental meetings and the Group encouraged continued efforts in that regard. It also welcomed the reintroduction of the document assistance centre, which provided documents and information technology equipment and services for delegates. All Member States must be provided with documents without any delays or conditions.

41. United Nations facilities must be used in accordance with the principles and purposes of the Organization, which promoted multilateralism. The Group was therefore concerned that United Nations

facilities had been used in a manner that was inconsistent with the principles of the Organization as outlined in the Charter of the United Nations. It urged all Member States and United Nations departments and bodies to refrain from sponsoring activities and events that undermined the principles and objectives of the Organization, and requested the Secretary-General to take all necessary measures to ensure that the nature and content of events, especially those conducted by non-governmental organizations, were approved before the use of the venue to ensure compliance with the principles of the Organization.

42. **Mr. Kisoka** (United Republic of Tanzania), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the Group attached great importance to the principle of multilingualism in the Organization and to the delivery of quality conference services in line with the equal treatment of the six official languages of the United Nations.

43. The Group noted with satisfaction that the overall utilization factor at the four main duty stations in 2014 had been above the established benchmark of 80 per cent and welcomed the efforts undertaken to increase the utilization rates. It urged those intergovernmental bodies whose average utilization factor had been below the benchmark in recent years to take measures to improve planning of their sessions so as to achieve the benchmark.

44. The Group welcomed the marketing strategy and other initiatives designed to improve the conference facilities of the Economic Commission for Africa, and it encouraged the Secretary-General to continue his efforts in that regard, particularly the efforts to modernize Africa Hall. However, the Organization should continue to modernize conference facilities at all duty stations, particularly at the United Nations Office at Nairobi.

45. The Group was concerned at how United Nations conference facilities and premises were being used and stressed that they should be used only by Member States for activities which promoted multilateralism and were in line with the objectives of the Organization. It strongly discouraged any activities, including those by non-governmental organizations and other non-State actors, which were in contradiction with the values and principles of the Organization. The Secretary-General should ensure that the use of United

Nations conference facilities was in strict compliance with the principles established relating to their use.

46. The Group welcomed the work carried out so far by the Department of Information to digitize important older documents using extrabudgetary resources. It was important to ensure timely presentation of the proposal concerning the digitization of all important United Nations documents, including parliamentary documents, at all duty stations.

47. On career development, the Group noted the difficulties in identifying and retaining qualified language professionals and the need to replenish the pool of language experts in order to prevent further negative impact on the capacity of the Organization to provide services in the six official languages of the United Nations. It therefore encouraged the Organization to enhance its partnerships with universities in Africa and its internship programmes at the United Nations Offices at Addis Ababa, Nairobi and elsewhere.

48. **Mr. Gowda** (India) said that the work of the staff of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management was essential in enabling the Organization to fulfil its mandates. The Department's major objective was to provide, as efficiently as possible, in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions, high-quality documents in a timely manner in all languages, as well as high-quality conference services to Member States at all duty stations.

49. The Department should continue to seek evaluation from Member States, whose satisfaction was a key performance indicator. His delegation welcomed the addition of three meeting rooms at Headquarters with the completion of the capital master plan.

50. India welcomed the recognition at the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly of the importance of various religious days observed in Member States, including Diwali, Gurburab, the Day of Vesak, Yom Kippur, Orthodox Good Friday and Orthodox Christmas, and the decision by the Secretariat to take into account the request made by the General Assembly for all relevant intergovernmental bodies to avoid holding meetings on those days in the biennium 2016-2017.

51. Timely issuance of documents and the quality of documentation were essential to the work of intergovernmental bodies, in particular the Fifth Committee. He reiterated the importance of multilingualism and called for continued improvements in translation and interpretation in all languages. Secretariat reports should include a summary, consolidated conclusions, recommendations, other proposed actions, and background information.

52. He welcomed the digitization by the Department of Public Information and the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management of 11 per cent of the 3 million United Nations documents identified as particularly important, out of a total of 17 million that predated the digital era. His delegation urged sustained focus on the project.

53. **Mr. Onuma** (Japan) said that maintaining an appropriate quality of conference services was essential to decision-making by the Member States, but the Secretariat should ensure that such services were provided as efficiently as possible through cost-saving measures. At the same time, Member States should not request unnecessary conference resources when deciding on the arrangements for new meetings in General Assembly resolutions. The quest for efficiencies in conference services should be a central concern in the Committee's discussions.

54. Although his delegation welcomed the initiatives of the Secretariat to increase the utilization of conference-servicing resources, the overall cost of such services should be reduced by planning fewer and shorter meetings, taking into account the historical pattern of meetings.

55. His delegation welcomed the establishment of two document assistance centres at Headquarters to ensure that Member States could obtain hard copies of documents on request. The service should continue to be provided within existing resources.

56. Japan encouraged intergovernmental bodies to follow the example of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization in using digital recordings as a cheaper alternative to other types of meeting records.

57. With regard to translation and interpretation, the Secretariat should avoid all but grammatical and

editorial changes to agreed texts of draft and adopted resolutions and to adhere strictly to the relevant guidelines.

58. His delegation understood the importance of the digitization of important older United Nations documents, but needed more information from the Secretariat regarding the definition and estimated quantity of such documents and the scope, cost and time frame of the project. The Secretariat should seek additional voluntary contributions for the project, including by broadening the donor base.

59. **Ms. Maciel González** (Paraguay) said that the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management should be given sufficient resources to fulfil the mandates approved by Member States. In the Documentation Division, such mandates included the timely availability of high-quality documents in all languages, with a view to fostering multilingualism. Availability in all languages was essential for such documents as those related to Security Council sanctions. Resources were also required for quality control of translations and publications, integrated global management and accountability. Following the intense work done by the Committee on Conferences to produce the report and draft resolution, her delegation hoped that the Fifth Committee would decide by consensus on the budget required for the pattern of conferences. A strong sense of responsibility and compromise, good faith, a constructive spirit, confidence-building and pragmatism should prevail.

Agenda item 134: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017 (continued)

International Trade Centre (A/70/6 (Sect. 13)/Add.1/Rev.1 and A/70/7/Add.1)

60. **Mr. Huisman** (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division), introducing a revised addendum to section 13, International Trade Centre, of the proposed programme budget for 2016-2017 (A/70/6 (Sect. 13)/Add.1/Rev.1), said that the Centre, the joint development agency of the United Nations and the World Trade Organization (WTO), which shared equally in funding its regular budget, was responsible for the implementation of subprogramme 6, Operational aspects of trade promotion and export development, of programme 10, Trade and development, of the biennial programme plan for the period 2016-2017. The Centre was mandated to

provide technical assistance to facilitate the integration of developing countries and countries with economies in transition, and in particular the least developed countries, into the multilateral trading system through export promotion and international business development, focusing on the international competitiveness of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises. Its aim was to translate the trade opening negotiated in WTO bilaterally and regionally into real trade on the ground to contribute to growth and development. The proposed overall level of resources for the Centre for the biennium 2016-2017 was 75,101,700 Swiss francs after recosting. The proposed United Nations share amounted to 37,550,850 Swiss francs, equivalent after recosting to \$39,527,200.

61. **Mr. Sene** (Vice-Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/70/7/Add.1), said that the Advisory Committee recommended approval of the proposed budget under section 13 and welcomed the new liaison arrangement proposed in Addis Ababa. Immediate steps must be taken to ensure compliance with the requirement for advance booking and purchase of tickets, particularly in view of the International Trade Centre's predominantly predictable travel arrangements. The Advisory Committee welcomed the simplified procedure proposed by the Centre for the presentation of its programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019, under which the Advisory Committee would review the budget proposal once rather than twice.

62. **Mr. Davidson** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group attached great importance to the work done by the International Trade Centre for the benefit of developing countries. With appropriate policies and rules, international trade could improve economic growth and development, social inclusion and environmental preservation. The Centre helped developing countries foster the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises, strengthen productive capacity-building and obtain enhanced trade and market intelligence information. The Group welcomed the Centre's focus on least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States, sub-Saharan Africa, and countries in conflict and post-conflict situations. It

hoped that the office in Addis Ababa would increase interaction with stakeholders on the ground.

63. In the light of the conclusion reached in recent evaluations that the Centre was in good health and delivered valuable services on the ground, the Group would, at the informal consultations, request further information about the proposed simplified budget procedure.

64. Because the Centre was jointly financed, it had not been obliged to implement Umoja prematurely and would be able to objectively assess the benefits of the new system as from November 2016. The Group commended the Centre on its strategic plan for 2015-2017, which took into account the Sustainable Development Goals and the quadrennial comprehensive policy review. At the informal consultations, it would seek clarification regarding the low rate of compliance with the requirement for advance booking and purchase of tickets.

Agenda item 135: Programme planning (continued)
(A/C.5/70/L.3)

Draft resolution A/C.5/70/L.3: Programme planning

65. Draft resolution A/C.5/70/L.3 was adopted.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.