

# UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY



Distr.  
GENEPAL

A/BUR/142  
8 November 1956

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Eleventh session  
GENERAL COMMITTEE

## ORGANIZATION OF THE ELEVENTH REGULAR SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

### Memorandum by the Secretary-General

1. The Secretary-General has the honour to place before the General Committee certain observations and suggestions regarding the arrangements for the meetings of the General Assembly and its Main Committees during the eleventh session. These observations and suggestions are in the main the result of extensive informal consultations with all the Permanent Representatives of the Members of the United Nations, and reflect reactions both to the problems of General Assembly organization and procedure as they have developed through past sessions, as well as to the special questions that arise from the much enlarged membership of the Assembly.

### Introduction

2. The work of the General Assembly and its procedures have been the subject of repeated review in past years. The problem confronting Members is not alone a question of the length of sessions but also of the effectiveness of the internal operation of the Assembly. The time available within the duration of a session should be used with maximum effectiveness in order that the vital role of the Assembly in the life of the Organization may be fulfilled. Opportunity should be provided for a full expression of the views of all Members and for such consideration of an item by a Committee as to ensure the best possible results.

3. Within this formula, all other questions relating to the conduct of the work of the plenary meetings or of the Main Committees should fall. The rules of procedure, the manner in which they are applied, or practices supplementing the

rules, should conform to the objectives already mentioned. Limitations or restrictions on debate should never serve as an end in themselves but, on the occasions on which they are used, should contribute to a more equitable distribution of the available time for all Members and thus to the attainment of the best substantive result for the item under discussion.

4. In consultations with the Permanent Representatives, a widespread desire was expressed that the session might be held to the normal length despite the much enlarged membership of the Assembly. Just as the time devoted to the consideration of an item may reach the point of diminishing returns, so the time devoted to the work of the Assembly as a whole may likewise reach that same point. The requirement that those representatives primarily responsible for specific items in the agenda cannot remain away from their other duties for too long a period is particularly decisive in avoiding a prolongation of the Assembly. The efforts of the entire membership of the Assembly should thus be concerted to the end that the duration of the eleventh session may be held to that of previous regular sessions. The Secretary-General is gratified to report the very widespread determination of Members, as expressed in the informal consultations with Permanent Representatives, to contribute to the attainment of this objective.
5. Towards the realization of the above purposes, the Secretary-General makes the suggestions outlined below.

Year-end recess and closing date for the session

6. By a note verbale of 27 September 1956, the Secretary-General, in order to facilitate the advance planning of the personal schedule of representatives attending the Assembly, consulted the Permanent Representatives regarding their Governments' views on the duration of the year-end recess. It was suggested that the Assembly should adjourn on 20 December 1956 and reconvene on 8 January 1957. Thirty-six Members concurred in this suggestion, while eight Members regarded the period as unduly long.
7. Rule 2 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly provides that: "On the recommendation of the General Committee, the General Assembly shall, at the beginning of each session, fix a closing date for the session". Taking into account the duration of the recess, and the desire to hold the session to the normal length, the Secretary-General wishes to suggest that the General Committee should propose to the Assembly 23 February 1957 as the closing date for the eleventh session.

Establishment of an eighth vice-presidency of the General Assembly

13. In view of the enlarged membership of the General Assembly, and in order to ensure appropriate representation on the General Committee, the Assembly may wish to establish an additional post of Vice-President of the Assembly.

Workload

14. In the informal consultations it was suggested, and the suggestion received wide support, that certain items of the agenda, especially in the technical fields, might be considered not on an annual, but on a biennial basis. This objective can be achieved in two ways:

- (1) The General Committee might recommend to the Assembly that certain items on the provisional agenda for the present session be postponed until the twelfth session; and
- (2) A Main Committee, in considering an item, might indicate in the relevant operative paragraph of the draft resolution recommended for adoption by the Assembly that the item be placed on the provisional agenda not of the twelfth, but of the thirteenth session. The exercise of this recommendatory discretion by a Main Committee is of special significance because of the short time between the closing of the eleventh session and the opening of the twelfth session. The time necessary for the implementation of certain resolutions and for the drafting and circulation of new reports to the Assembly will simply not be available in the short period between the sessions. It might be advisable, in the case of certain items which have not yet been considered by another organ, to refer these items in the first instance to the competent organ for consideration.

Conduct of work

15. In the interest of attaining the objectives mentioned above, the General Committee may wish to advise the Chairmen of the Main Committees in the following manner:

- (1) That the Committees, in determining the priority of their items, may engage in a tentative allocation of the number of meetings to be devoted to each item; arrangements might be made for extra meetings to conform to the schedule;

Schedule of meetings

8. It is suggested that both plenary and committee meetings should begin at 10.30 a.m. and 3.00 p.m. In view of the special considerations arising from the enlarged membership of the General Assembly, the heavy programme of work, and the desire for a more effective utilization of the time available, special efforts should be made to ensure that each meeting shall begin at the time scheduled.
9. It is proposed that a five-day working week be established, on the understanding that Saturday and night meetings may be scheduled should it prove necessary.
10. The General Committee may wish to advise those of its members who are Chairmen of Main Committees to take the necessary steps to ensure the maximum utilization of the time available to the Committees.

Establishment of an ad hoc political committee

11. The Secretary-General assumes that, in harmony with the procedure adopted in previous regular sessions, the General Assembly will wish to establish an ad hoc political committee for the eleventh session. In this connexion, it will be recalled that, under the terms of resolution 791 (VIII), the General Assembly decided to amend rule 38 of the rules of procedure to include in the membership of the General Committee "the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Political Committee when one is established".
12. The Secretary-General wishes to recommend that the name of the Ad Hoc Political Committee be changed to "Special Political Committee", inasmuch as it is generally regarded that the Committee has ceased to have the temporary character it seemed to have in the early years of the General Assembly. Furthermore, this change is suggested as a measure to expedite the consideration of items in the political field and to establish a greater equity between the two political Committees by providing a more even balance in the assignment of items to each of the two Committees.

- (2) That the speakers' list on a given item be closed at the earliest time consistent with the interests of Members and with expediting the consideration of the item;
- (3) That, after the general debate on an item, a limitation of ten minutes on the time allowed for subsequent interventions and for explanations of vote should be the general practice;
- (4) That discussions of procedure be kept thoroughly in hand by appropriate and timely clarifications;
- (5) That, on points of order, the Chairman shall immediately consider whether an intervention is a point of order and, if he so considers it, shall give an immediate ruling in accordance with rule 73 (114).

As a matter of course, the secretariat of each Committee will give the Chairman full assistance in organizing the work of each meeting and in clarifying the problems anticipated.

#### Verbatim records of Main Committees

16. The Secretary-General has the honour to recall that in previous years, in accordance with a recommendation made by the Fifth Committee at the second session,<sup>1/</sup> verbatim records have been authorized "for one Main Committee at a time, a Committee which, in the opinion of the General Committee, has the most important items on its agenda". The Secretary-General suggests that, as in previous sessions, verbatim services be provided for the First Committee; in addition, as a consequence of internal procedures which he has been able to develop, the Secretary-General will also be in a position to transcribe the debates of the Ad Hoc Political Committee.

#### Seating arrangements

17. In accordance with the practice followed with regard to previous sessions of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General caused lots to be drawn for the

---

<sup>1/</sup> A/498, Official Records of the General Assembly, Second Session, Annexes, page 1499.

purpose of choosing the Member to occupy the first desk on the Assembly floor from which the alphabetical seating order will begin. Ecuador was the name drawn and, consequently, Ecuador will sit at the first desk at the extreme right of the President. At the initial meetings of the Main Committees, the same seating order will be observed.

-----