



# General Assembly

Sixty-second session

## First Committee

**1**<sup>st</sup> meeting

Thursday, 4 October 2007, 3:30 p.m.  
New York

*Official Records*

*Chairperson:* Mr. Badji . . . . . (Senegal)

*The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.*

### Statement by the Chairperson

**The Chairperson** (*spoke in French*): Today we will discuss the organization of the work of the Committee for the sixty-second session of the General Assembly.

Allow me first to extend a warm welcome to all delegations participating in the work of the First Committee at the sixty-second session of the General Assembly. I look forward to working with you all during the next few weeks. We have a full agenda, but I am confident that we will be able to conduct our work in a cooperative and efficient manner.

It is indeed a great honour and privilege for my country, Senegal, and for me personally, to have been elected to the Chair of this important body, the First Committee. As you all know, and as I said at an earlier meeting of the plenary, the First Committee has achieved great recognition and will continue the noble tradition of giving shape to efficiency and to the revitalization of the General Assembly, where the 192 Member States are truly represented. It is here that all States, big and small, rich and poor, have a voice. With your cooperation and collaboration, I hope to enable all delegations to work with full independence, sovereignty and freedom. I am very grateful for your confidence in me and my country. With your support, I hope to guide the work of this Committee to a successful conclusion.

It goes without saying that I will rely greatly on the cooperation of all of you, collectively, individually and within the various regional and political groups, to overcome together that which divides us and focus on that which brings us together in this room. I will also depend very much upon my colleagues of the Bureau, with whom I have already had several meetings, and whom you elected, namely, our three Vice-Chairpersons, Mr. Ricardo Morote of Peru, Mr. Roman Hunger of Switzerland and Mr. Bassam Darwish of the Syrian Arab Republic, and our Rapporteur, Mr. Dainius Baublys of Lithuania. I am certain the Committee will benefit from the collective wisdom and expertise of all of those present and from the commitment and competence of the members of the Bureau.

I am also confident that the Committee will receive the full-fledged support of the members of the Secretariat who are present here today. I am sure the Committee will again receive the full support of the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, headed respectively by Mr. Sergio Duarte — who I have had the pleasure of meeting previously and who I warmly welcome here — and Mr. Muhammad Shaaban — who I also warmly welcome. Last but not least, the Committee will benefit greatly from the involvement of our long-time colleague and now friend, Mr. Jarmo Sareva, the Secretary of the First Committee, and his experienced team of the First Committee secretariat, who I have also had the pleasure of meeting.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.



The agenda for this afternoon's meeting mainly concerns the organization of the Committee's work, and I propose we begin our consideration of that item.

### Organization of work

**The Chairperson** (*spoke in French*): In considering the Committee's work for this session, I wish to draw your attention first to document A/C.1/62/1, containing a letter dated 21 September 2007 addressed to me by the President of the General Assembly. The letter states that the General Assembly, at its 3rd plenary meeting, decided to allocate 18 disarmament and international security agenda items to the First Committee for its consideration during this session.

Before I proceed to give a more detailed account of the programme of work and timetable as contained in document A/C.1/62/CRP.1, I would like to remind you that this document is based on the tentative programme of work and timetable that was adopted by the Committee on 30 October 2006, in the context of efforts to revitalize the work of the General Assembly. As is customary, the updated programme of work presented in CRP.1 takes into account the final programme of work of the plenary, including the fact that, this year, the General Assembly opened almost a week later than last year.

The programme of work and timetable were prepared in keeping with established practice and taking into account a number of initiatives proposed over the past several years, including the Assembly's decision 52/416 B, on the rationalization of the work of the First Committee. I also took into account paragraph 36 of the annex to resolution 51/241, which reads in part:

"The First Committee and the Fourth Committee shall not meet simultaneously and may consider meeting in a sequential manner during the regular session of the General Assembly."

However, you may have noted in CRP.1 that on the Wednesday and Thursday of the second week of the Committee's substantive session, on 16 and 17 October, both morning and afternoon meetings have been allocated to the First Committee. The Committee is also scheduled to have both morning and afternoon meetings on Tuesday, 23 and Tuesday, 30 October.

That is in line with the agreement made last year by my predecessor, Mrs. Mona Juul — who I would like to thank for the exemplary and efficient manner in which she conducted the Committee's work last year — and her counterpart from the Fourth Committee, during the sixty-first session of the General Assembly.

In accordance with the established practice, the First Committee will commence its substantive work on Monday, 8 October 2007. You will recall that the General Committee recommended that the First Committee conclude its work by 2 November. The Committee shall thus have a maximum of 24 meetings, including this organizational meeting, to consider the agenda items allocated to it by the General Assembly. That is the same number as during last year's session.

The Committee will also have to consider its tentative programme of work for the next session, in accordance with agenda item 121, concerning the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. Item 129, on programme planning, has been allocated to all the Main Committees and the plenary of the General Assembly to enhance discussion of evaluation, planning, budgeting and monitoring reports. We will revert to this item if the Assembly allocates any report under this item to our Committee.

I will make every effort to complete the work of the Committee on time, as recommended by the Bureau. I therefore earnestly appeal to you for your full cooperation in this matter. I should like to recall that, during the previous session, the First Committee had at its disposal a total of 24 meetings, of which it utilized 23 while having to consider a total of 16 disarmament-related agenda items. Consequently, I believe that, with members' cooperation and collaboration, we will be able to accomplish our tasks in a timely fashion.

As we have done during previous sessions, the consideration of the items allocated to the First Committee will proceed in three segments, as currently reflected in the proposed programme of work and timetable. The first segment, the general debate on all disarmament and international security items, will last from 8 to 16 October, for a total of seven meetings.

The list of speakers for that phase is currently open and I am aware that quite a number of delegations have already inscribed their names on it. I invite all others to do the same as soon as possible. I should like to remind delegations as they inscribe themselves on the list of speakers that a rolling list means that they

should make every effort to be ready to speak, possibly even one meeting sooner than they had originally planned, so that we can make maximum use and effectiveness of the valuable time available to us.

Based on the programme of work and timetable contained in document A/C.1/62/CRP.1, it is my intention to close the list of speakers for the general debate on Tuesday, 9 October, at 6 p.m. That is a strict deadline which I urge delegations kindly to respect. Additionally, in order to use the resources allocated to us efficiently, I would request delegations to limit their statements to a maximum of 10 minutes for those speaking in their national capacity, and 15 minutes for those speaking on behalf of several delegations, in particular the regional and political groups and others. In that connection, it is my intention to introduce the use of traffic lights, as is done in the plenary meetings of the General Assembly, but I hope not to have to make use of that system, which often disturbs representatives as they speak. I urge representatives to make every effort so that we may avoid having to interrupt statements. In the event that the Committee completes its general debate ahead of schedule — that is, before the end of Tuesday, 16 October — I propose that we move on to the next phase of our work in order to save time.

The second segment of the Committee's work will be, as members are aware, the structured thematic discussion on item subjects, as well as the introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions and decisions that will be submitted under disarmament and related international security agenda items. For delegations' advance information, an indicative timetable, based on the established practice of the Committee for the second phase of its work, has been circulated to all delegations in document A/C.1/62/CRP.2.

That segment will cover the period from the afternoon session of Wednesday, 17 to Friday, 26 October, and a total of 10 meetings have been allocated for that purpose. I will revert at a later stage to the programme of the thematic debate, which is a critical phase of our work. It is important to note that, in order to facilitate the Committee's work and to provide sufficient time to delegations for consultations, as well as to give enough time to the Secretariat to process draft resolutions in all official languages, the deadline for submission of draft resolutions and decisions will be Wednesday, 17 October, at 6 p.m. I intend to maintain that deadline and anticipate

delegations' cooperation in adhering to it, which will help to give us sufficient time to devote to substantive issues.

I would also encourage delegations to submit their draft resolutions and decisions as early as possible and as soon as they are ready so as to give delegations enough time to seek necessary instructions from their capitals and to consult sufficiently, so that the texts ultimately adopted may reflect the greatest possible degree of agreement. That is important to our work here and in the plenary. We must avoid drafting our texts at length and thereby imposing them on delegations once our meetings are already in session.

Let us devote sufficient time to exchanges of view, and far more time to dialogue and to setting out our positions so as to identify any potential compromises. That will help us to the greatest possible extent to avoid recorded votes wherever possible, and, where votes are inevitable, to determine why that is so and why we have not been able to reach understandings on draft resolutions related to issues that are important to all of us. We are all here to support and promote disarmament and to work for international security. Let us therefore avoid presenting delegations with faits accomplis and pushing systematically for votes in the First Committee. It is preferable, whenever possible, to adopt our draft resolutions by consensus, which is to the benefit of all. I insist on that point forcefully because we will not be helping the revitalization of the General Assembly if we spend so much time in this room speaking on subjects that are dear to all of us without actually listening to one another. Diplomacy would thereby be sidetracked.

This is important. I hope that all delegations will devote themselves to promoting the new spirit that we seek to breathe into every organ of our universal Organization, the First Committee in particular, which must blaze the trail for all the other Committees. We are not called the First Committee for nothing. Our name must live up to all its meanings.

In addition, it is imperative that delegations submit those draft resolutions that might entail programme budget implications as early as possible. That, too, is important. It is an aspect that we must take into account because it is critical that our universal Organization be efficient and make the best use of the precious contributions that every Member State allocates to it in order to help it to promote the noble

ideals to which our peoples and countries assign such significance. We cannot overemphasize that important dimension of our work.

I should like to remind delegations that the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee need adequate time to review the programme budget implications of a draft resolution. I am aware that those bodies have an extremely busy schedule, and it is important to give them sufficient time to consider draft resolutions with programme budget implications and to fulfil their mandates, which, as we all know, are highly important.

Finally, the third and last segment of the work of the Committee — action on all draft resolutions and decisions — will be from Monday, 29 October to Friday, 2 November. That is yet another important stage of the work of our Committee. A total of six meetings have been set aside for that purpose, which seems an adequate proportion of the total number of meetings allocated to the Committee. Last year, the Committee concluded the final phase, adopting 52 draft resolutions and two draft decisions, in five meetings. That set the precedent for our work. If we can reduce the number of meetings, we can demonstrate that the Committee is up to speed with respect to revitalization and efficiency. Consequently, I urge all delegations to take note of that fact and request their full cooperation so that we can take action on all draft resolutions and decisions, particularly those involving programme budget implications, in a timely manner. I have reiterated that often enough that there is no need to return to it.

It is my intention to retain the voting procedure involving the grouping of draft resolutions by clusters, using as a basis the agreed seven clusters mentioned in the 5 November 2004 letter from the Chairman of the First Committee to the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session, pursuant to paragraph 3 of annex C of resolution 58/316 on further measures for the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. Once again, I will in due course provide the Committee with specific information, in particular on that final phase of the work.

It is my firm belief that, based on the proposed programme of work and timetable that is now before the Committee, we will be able efficiently to consider all the agenda items allocated to it within the available time and to wrap up our work, as recommended by the

General Committee, by Friday, 2 November 2007. I should like to remind delegations of the need to maintain the necessary spirit of compromise and flexibility in the process of implementing the proposed programme of work and timetable I have just referred to. The Bureau will undertake to meet regularly to assess the state of progress of our work and, on the basis of that evaluation, make recommendations to allow the First Committee to move systematically ahead towards the completion of its work without delay.

After all this, may I take it that the Committee wishes to approve the proposed draft programme of work and timetable contained in document A/C.1/62/CRP.1?

*It was so decided.*

**The Chairperson** (*spoke in French*): I call on the representative of Cuba.

**Mr. Benítez Versón** (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your well-deserved election. We are familiar with your excellent work as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and we are convinced that you will guide the First Committee, too, in an outstanding manner. I take this opportunity to greet the other officers of the Bureau.

We also thank you, Sir, for your opening statement on how you intend to shape our work. I can assure you that Cuba fully concurs with your intentions.

I have asked to speak to make some brief remarks on the First Committee's proposed programme of work, and specifically on the proposed deadline of Wednesday, 17 October for the submission of draft resolutions by delegations. I have the impression that the proposed deadline could hamper the efficiency of the Committee's work. I believe that delegations would have an extremely short time — a very reduced amount of time — in which to carry out consultations on draft resolutions. Indeed, practically speaking, delegations would have only seven working days in which to consult and submit their draft resolutions. They would have from 8 to 11 October — the twelfth is a holiday — and then from 15 to 17 October. That is only seven working days.

We are sure that many draft resolutions, particularly the less complicated ones, can be submitted before the deadline. But it is possible that there are also other, somewhat more complicated issues that will require additional consultation time. That is why my delegation suggests that we consider the possibility of extending the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions until Friday, 19 October, instead of Wednesday, 17 October. That is only 48 additional hours. We do not believe that that would affect the work of the Secretariat, but it could be of much help to delegations in terms of the effectiveness of their work.

**The Chairperson** (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Cuba for the kind words he addressed to the Chair; I also thank him for his proposal. Indeed, 17 October seems quite soon, but it was an attempt at planning. As I said, we will be flexible in applying all the rules that we have inherited. I believe that this proposal will be studied by the Bureau and the Secretariat to see if an adjustment can be made, if 19 October would be preferable to 17 October, bearing in mind what the representative said.

However, I think that we must bear in mind that these strict guidelines were intended to give us some restrictions and instil a new mindset, because we must avoid getting stuck on the starting block of the past, which has often negatively affected our negotiations. Instead of clinging to practice, which has prevented the First Committee from moving forward in order to explore other avenues and adopt new working methods, we must be able to set deadlines that will push us a bit so that we can achieve the results that we seek. The more time we give to delegations, the more time representatives will feel that they have to stay locked in frozen positions. That will not help to move the work of the Committee forward. I thank the representative for his question.

**Mr. Semin** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): On behalf of my delegation, I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. I have just come from the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. Last year, when Senegal and Russia co-chaired the Conference, we had a very positive experience cooperating with the Senegalese delegation at the Conference. Ambassador Ousmane Camara of Senegal was a very good partner. That is why I believe that Senegalese diplomacy, expressed through you, will ensure the successful work of the First Committee.

I have a question about the length of statements during the first segment of our work. If I understood correctly, the length of statements made by representatives remains unchanged from last year. If that is the case, I support Cuba's proposal that the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions be extended.

When we talk about improving the efficiency of our work, particularly in the First Committee, we are referring to the need to improve the quality of our work on draft resolutions. Automatically reducing the time that we spend on drafting texts might negatively affect the quality of draft resolutions. I believe that a number of new draft resolutions with quite complex texts were distributed in Geneva in recent weeks. And, of course, work of good quality must be carried out in bilateral and multilateral negotiations. That is why we believe that the representative of Cuba made a very wise proposal.

**The Chairperson** (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for the kind words addressed to the Senegalese delegation. Indeed, the cooperation between our two countries on disarmament issues extends to a much broader framework, and that is to the credit of our two countries and our authorities.

I have already responded with regard to the proposal by the representative of Cuba. We will certainly consider it when the Bureau reviews today's meeting with the Secretariat.

As to the length of statements, the representative is also quite right. We will certainly insist on that to a greater extent so that representatives do not prolong their statements, which are useful but sometimes slow down the work of the Committee. In any event, we have duly noted the representative's comments. The Bureau will convene shortly after this meeting to consider them.

**Mr. Shamaa** (Egypt): First, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, and to express our delight at seeing you chairing the First Committee this year. We express our full support for your chairmanship and our intention to work very closely with you and all other delegations in order to have a successful First Committee session this year.

In reference to the proposal made by Cuba and the Russian Federation, we feel that there is merit in

extending the deadline so as to give delegations some additional time to work on draft resolutions. What I really wanted to say however, is that at the end of the day this deadline is only indicative, if my memory serves me right,. In other words, a decision can be taken to extend it. If I am not mistaken, this happened last year; the deadline for submission of draft resolutions was extended.

If this is the understanding, we can go along with having the deadline as 19 or even 22 October. It does not matter, since one is a Friday and the other is a Monday morning, so it does not make much difference. Of course, it should be understood that if a delegation wants to present a draft resolution, the decision should always be taken to allow that, since it is the right of States to present proposals for draft resolutions. I think there is merit in that proposal, and we will follow your guidance on that.

**The Chairperson** (*spoke in French*): I have already answered that. I think that this matter is almost resolved, but the Bureau will take a final decision on it, and we will then make a recommendation, which the Committee will then adopt. So please do not insist further on this point, considering that it has almost been resolved.

Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? If not, I take it that the Committee approves the proposed draft programme of work and the timetable contained in document A/C.1/62/CRP.1.

*It was so decided.*

**The Chairperson** (*spoke in French*): I should like now to draw your attention to the relevant rules and recommendations of the General Assembly affecting the work of the Main Committees, including those contained in decision 34/401, especially its provisions dealing with explanations of vote, rights of reply and budgetary and financial questions, which I intend to apply, with the cooperation and assistance of all members of the First Committee.

In order to make full use of the time and the conference services allocated to the Committee, I intend, with your full cooperation, to hold the meetings from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. This is extremely important, and I personally intend to follow the example already set by the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. I will begin the meetings promptly, and I urge you to be on

time so that we can begin our meetings. I do not want to be the kind of Chairman who starts meetings when we do not have a quorum, but I think it is high time for us to do that, given the time constraints and the work we have before us. This is part of the revitalization of the General Assembly and the seriousness with which we want to work and the image we want to give to the world. It is often said that diplomats have all the time in the world and waste much time in never starting their meetings promptly. I hope that we will be able to demonstrate that that is often a facile criticism of the diplomats that we are.

I would also like to draw your attention to agenda item 5, entitled "Election of the officers of the Main Committees" and also to rule 99, section (a), of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, as amended by resolution 56/509 of 8 July 2002, which reads as follows:

"All the Main Committees shall, at least three months before the opening of the session, elect a Chairman. Elections of the other officers provided for in rule 103 shall be held at the latest by the end of the first week of the session."

In view of the above, I propose that the First Committee, in accordance with the aforementioned resolution, should consider this item in May or June 2008, about three months before the opening of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly. If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Committee wishes to proceed accordingly.

*It was so decided.*

**The Chairperson** (*spoke in French*): Concerning the submission of draft resolutions, I wish to draw your attention to paragraph 28 of document A/62/250, dated 19 September 2007, entitled "Organization of the sixty-second regular session of the General Assembly, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items", which reads in part:

"The General Committee noted and decided to bring to the attention of the General Assembly that the Secretary-General encourages Member States to transmit all draft resolutions and decisions in electronic form as well as on paper ... and wishes to inform the Member States that the submitters are responsible for ensuring that the electronic and paper versions of the draft

resolutions and decisions are identical in content.”

I think that is important. It is a good idea for us to remember this.

In this connection, I urge those Member States wishing to submit draft resolutions or decisions to the Committee to kindly observe the procedures outlined in the Delegate’s Handbook and on the First Committee “Quickfirst” website, which was presented by the Secretariat at the informal briefing this past Tuesday. I think that was a very important meeting, and again I think it would be a good idea for delegates to refer to Quickfirst. I think it is a very interesting website.

I give the floor to the Secretary of the First Committee to inform the Committee of certain procedural matters.

**Mr. Sareva** (Secretary of the Committee): First, I would very much like to reaffirm the commitment of the Secretariat to assist members in the smooth functioning of the First Committee.

I provided members with some procedural information at the informal briefing held last Tuesday. I definitely do not want to go through all that again, but rather to highlight some key points and deadlines.

First, as introduced at the briefing on Tuesday, the Secretariat has launched a dedicated website for the First Committee, called Quickfirst. We encourage delegations to make the best and fullest use of it and we hope that it will assist delegations in their participation in the First Committee. Mr Sergei Cherniavsky, as members learned on Tuesday, is the focal point in the Secretariat for the website.

Secondly, with respect to the kits for draft resolutions and decisions, the Secretariat has again prepared the kits with preformatted draft resolutions in electronic form, which are available to sponsoring delegations, together with formatted sponsors’ lists. They are also available on the Quickfirst website. I would encourage delegations to contact the Secretariat — again, Mr. Cherniavsky or Mr. Ben Homrighausen — for assistance on that matter.

Very briefly, when delegations submit draft resolutions in electronic form, they can do so either on a diskette, flash media — such as a memory card — or a CD-ROM. If need be, they can send them by e-mail. The focal point for receiving all draft resolutions and decisions from delegations is Ms. Tatyana Shestakova, who is sitting behind me.

Turning now to co-sponsorship of draft resolutions, the Secretariat will maintain the hard copy of the sponsors’ list, which will be available in the conference room during meetings and in room S-2977 between the meetings. As an alternative, the sponsoring delegation may keep the list and submit it together with the draft for processing. In order to avoid any errors or misunderstandings, we would prefer to have only one master list for each draft resolution. All questions regarding sponsors’ lists should be addressed to Ms. Emer Herity.

One important point is that, if delegations download a kit from the Quickfirst website, it would be appreciated if they could let us know, either in a meeting or by e-mail, perhaps to Mr. Cherniavsky, that they have done so and that they intend to submit a draft resolution accordingly.

Finally, on the list of participants, I would also like to kindly remind delegations to submit to the Secretariat the list of their delegations to the First Committee as soon as possible. As was mentioned on Tuesday, the cut-off date for the processing of the list of representatives is Thursday, 11 October, for issuance on 18 October. Any submission after that cut-off date will be issued in an addendum after the Committee’s session.

I have one final point. There is or shortly will be available on Quickfirst, under “Questions and answers”, some useful historical information pertaining to the work of the First Committee, and more specifically, information on the issue of the provision to the First Committee of verbatim records. That information is provided after some extensive research that was done at the request of a delegation, and I am confident that members will find it quite interesting.

*The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.*