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Agenda item 139

Programme planning

Letter dated 26 October 2022 from the Chair of the Third Committee addressed to the Chair of the Fifth Committee

I have the pleasure to transmit herewith a summary of the informal meeting of the Third Committee of the General Assembly on “Programme planning” held on Wednesday, 12 October 2022 (see annex). The informal meeting considered programmes 13, International drug control, crime and terrorism prevention and criminal justice, 20, Human rights, and 21, International protection, durable solutions and assistance to refugees, of the proposed programme budget for 2023. I would be grateful if the views expressed by the members of the Committee could be taken into consideration by the Fifth Committee during its deliberations on programmes 13, 20 and 21 of the proposed programme budget.

(Signed) José Alfonso **Blanco Conde**
Chair
Third Committee



Annex

Summary of the Chair

1. The Third Committee held an informal meeting on 12 October 2022, on “Programme planning”.
2. The Director of the Division for Policy Analysis and Public Affairs of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Jean-Luc Lemahieu, the Acting United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Nada Al-Nashif, and the Director of the Division of Strategic Planning and Results of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Ritu Shroff, briefed the Committee on programme 13, International drug control, crime and terrorism prevention and criminal justice, programme 20, Human Rights, and programme 21, International protection, durable solutions and assistance to refugees, of the proposed programme budget for 2023, respectively.
3. Following the briefings, an interactive exchange ensued with Member States.

Summary of deliberations

4. Delegations expressed their appreciation to the Chair and the Bureau of the Committee for convening the informal meeting. Delegations also thanked the representatives of the Secretariat for their briefings.
5. Delegations recalled that the Committee for Programme and Coordination is the main subsidiary organ of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly for planning, programming and coordination and recognized its critical technical advisory role. The Committee was strongly encouraged to conclude its consideration of all programmes by consensus at its future sessions. The delegation of El Salvador stressed that the working methods of the Committee should be reviewed to allocate enough time and resources for the consideration of each programme in a substantial manner in order to reinforce the implementation of its mandate and to contribute to reaching a beneficial and consensual agreement.
6. Delegations recognized that the Committee for Programme and Coordination was able to agree on recommendations for more programmes compared with previous years. The delegation of Australia, also on behalf of Canada and New Zealand, noted that this improvement was possible following the extension of the session to five weeks. Delegations also emphasized that responsibility for administrative and budgetary matters lay with the Fifth Committee.
7. The delegation of Brazil recognized that the consideration of programme planning posed a challenge for all Member States engaged in the Third Committee, given its volume of work and extensive agenda within a short period of time. The delegation expressed hope that the discussions would lead to positive recommendations to the Fifth Committee in terms of the approval of the programmes and also invited the Third Committee to discuss, in due course, ways to tackle the issue of programme planning in the future.
8. Several delegations, including the United States of America, Switzerland, also on behalf of Liechtenstein, Australia, also on behalf of Canada and New Zealand, the European Union, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Mexico and France, expressed disappointment and regret that the Committee for Programme and Coordination was unable to provide conclusions and recommendations for programmes 13, 20 and 21. In this regard, the delegation of El Salvador expressed support for reviewing the working methods of the Committee to reallocate sufficient time and resources to enable it to fulfil its purpose and reach

consensus on proposals submitted for its consideration. The delegation also expressed concern that, by paragraph 16 of General Assembly resolution [76/236](#), the review of the programme plans by the Third Committee might become the norm. In that regard, some delegations said that the discussion of the programmes in the Third Committee was a duplication of the work of the Fifth Committee and added that the Third Committee should instead focus on its own mandate areas and already high workload.

9. The delegation of Cuba stressed the importance of having a substantive discussion in the Third Committee to make recommendations to the Fifth Committee. The delegation noted that paragraph 16 of resolution [76/236](#) was clear on the role of Main Committees to consider programmes when the Committee for Programme and Coordination was unable to come to an agreement and highlighted the full capability of the Third Committee to analyse the plans. The delegation acknowledged that the Fifth Committee was the appropriate forum for budgetary matters but that analysing substantive items was not within its mandate, whereas it was the responsibility of the Third Committee to consider the programmes substantively and to decide whether they should be sent to the Fifth Committee without modifications. The delegation stated that the Third Committee was apt to address matters pertaining to human rights and could discuss whether the proposed plans adequately reflected the Third Committee mandates.

10. Similarly, the delegation of Pakistan stressed the importance of a deliberation by the Third Committee on the work of the three programmes and noted the need to reach a consensus on them. The delegation of China highlighted the importance of cooperation, mutual understanding, efficiency and effectiveness in the work of the United Nations and that it is of vital importance that United Nations bodies and organs function effectively according to their respective mandates. The delegation of Egypt stressed that it was appropriate for the Third Committee to discuss programmes for which the Committee for Programme and Coordination had not reached consensus, in accordance with resolution [76/236](#).

11. The delegation of the United States of America stated that, while it shared the assessment of paragraph 16 on the plenary or Main Committees of the General Assembly considering programme plans without conclusions and recommendations from the Committee for Programme and Coordination, it did not mean that those programmes should go to the Main Committees beforehand.

12. Some delegations, including Australia and El Salvador, recalled that the Fifth Committee is a consensus-based body by tradition and that any conclusions or attempts by other Main Committees to move forward without consensus would undermine the Committee for Programme and Coordination, the Fifth Committee and the entire planning process. Other delegations, including the European Union and France, reiterated that planning is a consensus-based exercise and that the Fifth Committee is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the mandate and has the final responsibility to adopt the programme plan and budget. The delegations of the United States of America, El Salvador and the United Kingdom emphasized that the Third Committee does not have the tradition or the required technical expertise. Several delegations, including Switzerland, also on behalf of Liechtenstein, as well as France and the European Union, stressed that the role and prerogatives of the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the Fifth Committee should not be duplicated.

13. The delegations of El Salvador, Switzerland and the United Kingdom expressed concern that the discussion was an additional burden to the workload of the Third Committee. Other delegations, including the United States of America and Spain, stressed that deliberations on the programmes were long and politically sensitive and would take considerable time away from the work of the Third Committee. The

delegation of France noted that the informal meeting itself had added to an already busy programme of work. Other delegations, including Switzerland, also on behalf of Liechtenstein, stated that, while the Third Committee might choose to carry out a task that had not been completed by the Committee for Programme and Coordination, it had no obligation to do so. The delegation of Japan expressed its understanding that each Main Committee could decide whether and how to address programme planning in their programme of work.

14. The delegation of the European Union expressed its full support for programme 20 and stressed the critical work done by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in advancing human rights, including through treaty bodies, the Human Rights Council, the universal periodic review and the special procedures. The delegation continues to oppose any amendment and weakening of human rights in either the Third or Fifth Committees. The delegation emphasized the importance of giving the necessary means to OHCHR to allow for the full implementation of the Secretary-General's call to action on human rights. The delegation therefore called for the adoption of programme 20 by the Fifth Committee without modifications. The delegation of Pakistan welcomed the holding of the discussion within the Third Committee and expressed hope that deliberations on substantive issues could resolve questions on programme priorities and resource allocation on the different aspects of human rights, especially the disparity between civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights in terms of their budget.

15. The delegation of the European Union expressed support for programme 21. A delegation cited support of programme 21, commending the work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and UNHCR.
