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Agenda item 139

Programme planning

Letter dated 28 October 2022 from the Chair of the First Committee addressed to the Chair of the Fifth Committee

In its resolution [76/236](#) of 24 December 2021, the General Assembly reiterated that, whenever the Committee for Programme and Coordination could not provide conclusions and recommendations on a given subprogramme or programme of the proposed programme budget, the plenary or the relevant Main Committee or Main Committees of the General Assembly responsible for those mandates would consider the said subprogramme or programme at the very start of its session in order to provide any conclusions and recommendations to the Fifth Committee, at the earliest opportunity, and no later than four weeks after the start of the session, for timely consideration by the Fifth Committee.

In the report of the Committee for Programme of Coordination on its sixty-second session ([A/77/16](#)), held from 31 May to 1 July 2022, the Committee recommended, in line with General Assembly resolution [76/236](#), that the Assembly, at its seventy-seventh session, review the programme plan for programme 3, Disarmament, of the proposed programme budget for 2023, under the agenda item entitled “Programme planning”.

Accordingly, the First Committee, at its tenth plenary meeting, convened on 13 October 2022, held a debate on working methods of the First Committee and programme planning and considered the programme plan for programme 3, Disarmament, of the proposed programme budget for 2023. I enclose herewith a summary of the debate for timely consideration by the Fifth Committee (see annex).

(Signed) Mohan Pieris
Chair
First Committee



Annex

Summary prepared by the Chair of the First Committee of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session on the debate on working methods of the First Committee and programme planning¹

1. On 13 October 2022, in accordance with its adopted programme of work and timetable for its seventy-seventh session (A/C.1/77/CRP.1) and General Assembly resolutions [75/325](#) and [76/236](#), the First Committee, at its tenth meeting, held a debate on working methods of the First Committee and programme planning.
2. The Chair of the First Committee at its seventy-seventh session and Ambassador of Sri Lanka, Mohan Pieris, opened the meeting by inviting interventions from States on the topics at hand. The Committee heard statements from 10 States, one of which spoke on behalf of a group of 3 States, and one regional organization.
3. At the outset of the meeting, the Chair informed the First Committee of his intention to prepare a summary of the discussion under his own responsibility for onward transmittal to the Chair of the Fifth Committee for further consideration. The present text is submitted pursuant to that announcement.
4. Delegations expressed appreciation to the Chair of the First Committee for convening the meeting on working methods and programme planning. Several delegations noted with disappointment that the Committee for Programme and Coordination had been unable to reach consensus on conclusions and recommendations on programme 3, Disarmament, for the proposed programme plan for the second consecutive year. Some delegations referred to the inability of the Committee for Programme and Coordination to reach consensus on recommendations for five programmes, including disarmament, for 2023.
5. Discontent was expressed regarding the inability of the Committee for Programme and Coordination to reach consensus on recommendations and conclusions for programme 3, Disarmament, for 2023, which provided the Secretariat with critical intergovernmental guidance. Calls were made for the Committee for Programme and Coordination to redouble its efforts to reach consensus in future sessions.
6. Reflecting on the report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination on its sixty-second session ([A/77/16](#)), several delegations supported the draft narrative therein, calling it an accurate and faithful translation of relevant mandates in the area of disarmament. In that regard, several delegations called for the approval of the subprogramme narrative without modification and for the First Committee to recommend that action to the Fifth Committee. Emphasizing the role of the Main Committee in reviewing and taking action on the recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, one delegation suggested reproducing language contained in resolution [76/236](#) so that the report read “to approve, on an exceptional basis and without creating precedent, for programme 3 of the proposed budget for 2023, a programme narrative that is composed solely of the list of mandates at the programme level and the objectives approved by the General Assembly in its resolution [71/6](#) and the deliverables for 2023 at the subprogramme level”. In addition,

¹ Drafted under the sole responsibility of the Chair and without prejudice to the individual views of members of the First Committee.

one delegation stated that more time should be allocated by the First Committee to discussions of such matters pursuant to General Assembly resolution [76/236](#).²

7. Some delegations emphasized that any discussions on programme planning matters should not be duplicated in other bodies, including the First Committee. The heavy workload of that Committee was noted as a reason to not bring programme planning questions into that forum. In addition, the view was expressed that it was difficult for substantive disarmament experts to discuss budget matters. One delegation noted that the meeting held on 13 October 2022 should not establish a precedent for the future consideration of programme planning by the First Committee.

8. The view was expressed that the Fifth Committee bore ultimate responsibility for approving programme planning. Recalling that the Committee for Programme and Coordination was a consensus-based body and that the Fifth Committee was a consensus-based body by tradition, several delegations stressed that any conclusions or recommendations made by the First Committee on those matters should also be agreed by consensus. The view was expressed that any attempts to move those matters forward without consensus would only undermine the Committee for Programme and Coordination, the Fifth Committee and the budget planning process.

9. In reference to report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination on its sixty-second session ([A/77/16](#)), several delegations expressed support for the work of the Office for Disarmament Affairs and its efforts to implement its mandates in support of Member States. One delegation noted that support provided by the Secretariat must be objective and in strict accordance with the mandates provided by States.

10. Particular references were made to the work of the Office for Disarmament Affairs relating to the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons; the first Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons; programming related to gender and General Assembly resolution [75/48](#), on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control; and Security Council resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#), on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Gratitude was also expressed to the Office for its stewardship of the United Nations Disarmament Fellowship, Training and Advisory Services Programme. One delegation welcomed the development by the Office of its first strategic plan for the period 2021–2025 and steps taken by the Office to improve monitoring and evaluation.

11. One delegation underscored the importance of geographical balance in the staffing of the Office for Disarmament Affairs. It was noted by one delegation that the number of staff from one geographical region exceeded the number of staff from the other four regions combined. That view was endorsed by another delegation, which observed that the civil society representatives making presentations to the Committee were anything but diverse. Questions related to the increasing amount of extrabudgetary funding were also raised. The importance of balanced geographical representation and increased diversity in the membership of groups of governmental experts mandated by the First Committee was emphasized.

² In paragraph 16 of its resolution [76/236](#), the General Assembly reiterated that, “whenever the Committee for Programme and Coordination cannot provide conclusions and recommendations on a given subprogramme or programme of the proposed programme budget, the plenary or the relevant Main Committee or Main Committees of the General Assembly responsible for those mandates will consider the said subprogramme or programme at the very start of its session in order to provide any conclusions and recommendations to the Fifth Committee, at the earliest opportunity, and no later than four weeks after the start of the session, for timely consideration by the Fifth Committee”.

12. In response to the draft narrative contained in the report under discussion, one delegation noted positively the lessons learned from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic that were described therein, concurring that digital tools could facilitate inclusive and environmentally friendly discussions. The view was expressed that alternative working methods adopted during the pandemic should be seen as temporary. One delegation stated that all meetings of the First Committee should be conducted in an in-person format, noting that hybrid and remote options were not acceptable.

13. One delegation noted that the participation of non-governmental entities should be conducted without detriment to the intergovernmental nature of the work of the Committee and in line with established practice and the rules of the General Assembly. The delegation underscored that non-governmental organizations that have been granted the status of observer at the Assembly, as well as other interested parties approved by Member States under a non-objection procedure, should participate within the framework of a specialized, informal segment dedicated to non-governmental entities. The delegation emphasized that all contributions from non-governmental entities must comply with the agenda of the First Committee.

14. The Chair of the First Committee expressed appreciation to delegations for their engagement in the discussions and reiterated his intention to prepare a summary for transmittal to the Fifth Committee for further consideration.
