

United Nations GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SIXTEENTH SESSION

Official Records



1008th
PLENARY MEETING

Wednesday, 20 September 1961,
at 10:30 a.m.

NEW YORK

CONTENTS

	Page
<i>Agenda item 3:</i>	
<i>Credentials of representatives to the sixteenth session of the General Assembly:</i>	
(a) Appointment of the Credentials Committee	3
<i>Agenda item 4:</i>	
Election of the President	3
Address by Mr. Mongi Slim, President of the sixteenth session of the General Assembly . .	4

President: Mr. Mongi SLIM (Tunisia).

Temporary President: Mr. Frederick H. BOLAND (Ireland).

AGENDA ITEM 3

Credentials of representatives to the sixteenth session of the General Assembly:

(a) Appointment of the Credentials Committee

1. The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT: Under rule 28 of the rules of procedure, the General Assembly at the beginning of each session appoints a Credentials Committee composed of nine members nominated by the President. I now propose that the Credentials Committee for the sixteenth session should consist of the following Member States: Australia, Burma, Iceland, Italy, Mali, Nicaragua, Peru, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America.

It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 4

Election of the President

2. The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT: I now invite members of the Assembly to proceed to the election of the President of the sixteenth session. The election will be held in accordance with the provisions of rules 31 and 94 of the rules of procedure. The vote will be taken by secret ballot.

3. Before asking the Assembly to proceed to the vote, I call on the representative of Indonesia.

4. Mr. SASTROAMIDJOJO (Indonesia): While I realize that my intervention at this stage is unusual, although not without precedent, I request the indulgence of the Assembly in order to make a brief statement. I am sure that it will greatly facilitate the vote about to be taken.

5. As many Members of this Assembly may know, it is in the democratic tradition of my country to consider and discuss matters with a view to achieving a true meeting of minds. We believe that final decisions should not reflect, still less consolidate, differences in strength, but rather should result in unity of action.

6. This spirit and principle of unanimity also guided the deliberations of the Asian-African Conference in Bandung^{1/} and the recently concluded Conference of Non-Aligned Countries in Belgrade.^{2/} My Government and I, personally, were privileged to participate in both those Conferences and to contribute our share to their efforts to strengthen world peace and promote friendship and co-operation among all nations.

7. Now we, the Government and delegation of the Republic of Indonesia, are again privileged to cement the solidarity that exists between Asia and Africa and to reaffirm our dedication to the cause of international peace and harmony. In fact, we consider it incumbent upon us to pursue actively in this Assembly the efforts begun at Bandung and carried forward at the recent Belgrade Conference.

8. We share with every Member of this body the responsibility of making the Assembly an effective instrument for promoting friendship and understanding among all the nations of the world. Indeed, who at this critical moment, in a world full of tensions and disunity, can doubt the need for unity of purpose and action? Perhaps as never before, the question of war or peace overshadows the deliberations of this session of the General Assembly. Perhaps as never before, the next President of the General Assembly must, in meeting the heavy burden and the noble challenge of his office, command our undivided support.

9. No one will doubt that in this time of crisis we can ill afford a divided Assembly. As a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations the Assembly should not from the outset be preoccupied with a controversy about the Presidency.

10. Therefore, on behalf of the Indonesian Government and delegation, I wish to convey our deep appreciation for the support and encouragement we have received from so many Member States; we wish especially to convey our heartfelt thanks to those who immediately gave their support to my candidacy, and indeed our gratitude for the courtesy and kindness extended to us by all. But, for the urgent reasons I have just stated, I wish, with the concurrence of my Government, to announce my withdrawal as a candidate for the office of President of the General Assembly at its sixteenth session.

11. I am confident that the election of Mr. Mongi Slim in an atmosphere of amity and harmony will not only be an auspicious augury for our future work, but, as the election of the first African to preside over this Assembly, will also stand as a clear recognition of the importance of re-emerging Africa. Mr. Slim's dedication to Asian-African solidarity and his great abilities are certainly too well known for me to have to extol them before the Assembly.

^{1/} Held from 18-24 April 1955.

^{2/} Held from 1-6 September 1961.

12. Let us, then, begin with an act of unanimity; and let that beginning be the prelude to an Assembly of co-operation in building a new world of friendship and peace.

At the invitation of the Temporary President, Mr. Caimeron Measketh (Cambodia) and Mr. Penteado (Brazil) acted as tellers.

A vote was taken by secret ballot.

Number of ballot papers:	97
Invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	97
Abstentions:	1
Number of members voting:	96
Required majority:	49

Number of votes obtained:

Mr. Mongi Slim (Tunisia) 96

Mr. Mongi Slim (Tunisia) was unanimously elected President of the sixteenth session of the General Assembly, and took the Chair.

Address by Mr. Mongi Slim, President of the sixteenth session of the General Assembly

13. The PRESIDENT (translated from French): It is beneath the impact of the understandable shock caused by the sudden and tragic death of the Secretary-General, Mr. Dag Hammarskjöld, that I take up the heavy responsibilities just entrusted to me as a result of your confidence. You can therefore imagine my emotion, now that the honour falls to me of being elected to the high office of President of the sixteenth session of the General Assembly. It is very difficult for me to express the immense sorrow that I feel as I sit next to the place previously occupied, for seven years, by Mr. Dag Hammarskjöld. The Secretary-General of the United Nations died a victim to his duty—on the battlefield, one might say, of peace. His illustrious example should inspire all those who assume responsibilities towards the international community. It is this example of loyalty, devotion and perseverance which I hope to have as my inspiration in guiding the work of this session which you have entrusted to me. I am most grateful to you and, with all my heart, I thank you.

14. In particular, I should like here to express all my gratitude to Dr. Ali Sastroamidjojo, who kindly stood down in my favour. By this generous gesture, he helped our General Assembly to achieve virtually unanimous cohesion around my humble person, and this I deeply appreciate.

15. I am convinced that our Organization has at the present time a special need for such cohesion in order to face the distressing and delicate situation in which we are placed and to find an appropriate solution, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations, which will strengthen it and guarantee its future, for the greatest good of humanity as a whole and especially of all those small and peaceable countries which, like mine, have placed their trust in it for the safeguarding of peace and the inauguration of an era of stability and international co-operation, based on justice and freedom, in accordance with the noble principles of the Charter.

16. I know that the merit of the office is the merit of him who holds it.

17. The task which I am today undertaking seems to me all the greater in that I have the honour of

following Mr. Boland, whose qualities of impartiality and patience won the admiration of all and thus enabled him to guide, with tact and consummate skill, a session which was extremely difficult and delicate. Conscious, therefore, of the importance of the function which you have entrusted to me, I shall try to preside over your work with all the necessary impartiality and in strict conformity with the rules of procedure. I venture to hope that you will give me generous and understanding co-operation, so that our work may be brought to a successful issue.

18. The honour you have conferred upon me extends well beyond my person; it is an honour bestowed upon my people and my country, Tunisia, which I have represented here since its accession to independence in 1956 and which has worked, in this Organization, for a right achievement of the objectives specified in the Charter. I am profoundly convinced that my brothers in Asia and Africa and especially my African brothers will regard this honour as their own, since this is the first time in the Organization's history that a man from Africa has been elected President of this Assembly. I should like to see, in this fact, the confirmation of Africa's appearance on the international stage. Is it not significant that it should be the national of a small country, situated precisely in that part of the world and in that continent, thought by some to be eternally cast for a passive rather than a competitive role, who is called upon, as a result of your confidence, to preside over your work, in the difficult circumstances of the present-day world? Furthermore, the admission, at the last session, of the sixteen new Members from Africa has shown even more clearly how desirable it is for our Organization to place its work for constructive peace and assured international stability on an increasingly universal basis.

19. What however I most fully realize, as I take up my new and heavy responsibilities, is the gravity of the present international situation and of the problems with which it confronts this General Assembly of ours. It means that during this session we shall have to exercise both patient vigilance and constructive imagination, if we want to find appropriate peaceful solutions based on the principles of the Charter and on right and justice.

20. I therefore hope, and I can assure you that I shall spare no effort in that direction, to be worthy of the formidable honour which has been done me—formidable, because the task we are undertaking, now that the threat of an apocalyptic conflagration is reappearing, will certainly not be an easy one. However, I have faith that with the co-operation of all the Members of the Assembly and of the United Nations Secretariat, whose devotion is known to us all, we shall be able to accomplish our task; in this way we shall, I hope help as best we may, if not to overcome all crises at least to reduce their gravity and dimensions, to promote welcome initiatives towards an improvement in international relations, mutual understanding and a narrowing of gaps between views, and thus to remove the threat of war and the terrible losses and vast devastation which war can inflict upon the whole of mankind.

21. In particular, I should like to hope that through this Assembly, destined once more to be the meeting-place of men of good will, substantial progress will be made on the important question of disarmament and an immediate and conclusive result achieved in the extremely serious matter of the discontinuance

of nuclear tests. A concrete and rapid solution of these two questions could effectively help to promote the cause of peace.

22. There is no problem, however complicated it may be and whatever the passions it may arouse, which cannot be solved by the persistent efforts and good will of men. Thus, in the question of the Congo progress has been made towards the solution desired and recommended in the various resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly. In the Congo the United Nations has achieved progress, which is known to all, through the understanding shown by every country and through the unremitting efforts of a staff whose courage is equalled only by its complete devotion. The aim which the United Nations is pursuing in this great African country, and which has cost the lives of many men of different nationalities, must be attained.

23. It is true that the current situation there is serious and has been aggravated by the tragic death of Mr. Hammarskjöld. However, with a little perseverance, it seems that the time is not far distant when we shall at last see a united and peaceful Congo

resume its place in the international community, as well as in the great African family which is still being so sorely tried by the upheavals inflicted upon it by a hesitant but none the less inevitable process of decolonization.

24. For in many places in Africa people are still suffering; new African nations are in the embryonic stage; may they be born without further suffering, may Algeria and Angola, in particular, enter international life in peace and concord and with the friendship of their former tutors! So long as the African continent is experiencing upheavals, world peace will not be assured; it will remain seriously threatened until the ghastly spectre of racialism has been banished forever; the peoples of South Africa and elsewhere must regain their rights in full and, above all, their dignity in their own country.

25. God grant that this session of the General Assembly, which opens on a note of grief, may close with the hope, at last well founded, that concord and peace—peace throughout the world—will reign over the human race, in freedom and justice!

The meeting rose at 11:45 a.m.