

UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL
ASSEMBLY



Distr.
GENERAL

A/5376
18 December 1962

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Seventeenth session
Agenda item 65

REVIEW OF THE PATTERN OF CONFERENCES

Report of the Fifth Committee

Rapporteur: Mr. N.A. QUAO (Ghana)

1. The Fifth Committee discussed, at its 965th and 966th meetings on 7 December 1962, agenda item 65: "Review of the pattern of conferences".
2. The Committee based its consideration of the item on a report (A/5317) in which the Secretary-General pointed out that in resolution 1202 (XII) of 13 December 1957 the General Assembly had laid down certain principles to govern the planning and financing of conferences and meetings of the United Nations, with the object of ensuring a rational and economical use of resources and facilitating the effective participation of Members in the work of the United Nations. It was necessary, as the period covered by the resolution was coming to a close on 31 December 1962, for the Assembly to review those principles and, in the light of developments since the beginning of 1958, to provide for a pattern extending beyond the first five-year period.
3. The experience of the period 1958-1962 was reviewed (paragraphs 2-9 of the report), by reference to the several operative paragraphs of resolution 1202 (XII). In paragraph 10 the Secretary-General alluded to the growing concern with which the General Assembly and other principal organs appeared to view the size of the conference programme. The time allowed under that programme for the substantive preparation of the work was so short that in many cases conferences and other meetings could not be truly productive; furthermore, because of the dense concentration of meetings between regular sessions of the General Assembly, serious difficulty arose as regards

the submission of reports of subsidiary bodies to their parent organs within the time limits specified in the rules of procedure. In paragraph 11 of his report, the Secretary-General enumerated the remedial measures which had been introduced, while in paragraph 12 he suggested that, in view of the action already initiated and of the special problems that would arise in 1964 in connexion with the major construction programme at Headquarters, it would be of advantage to defer the review of the pattern of conferences until the eighteenth session of the General Assembly. He further suggested that the Assembly, at its current session, should extend the provisions of resolution 1202 (XII) for one more year, subject to two modifications:

- (a) Under operative paragraph 2 (d) of the resolution an overlap would be permitted between the annual session of the International Law Commission and the summer session of the Economic and Social Council; and
- (b) The Economic Commission for Africa and its subsidiary bodies would be included within the provisions of operative paragraph 2 (c).

Those suggestions had been approved by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions.

4. In general, delegations emphasized, as the Secretary-General had done, their concern over the growing number of conferences and meetings, which strained the staffing and financial resources both of the Organization and of participating Member States. Furthermore, a number of representatives, though holding that it would have been preferable - had time permitted - to review the matter thoroughly at the present session, agreed that a deferment could be turned to advantage during the coming twelve months if the Secretary-General succeeded in bringing home to the competent organs the importance and urgency of the remedial measures which he had outlined, as well as the need for moderation in fixing their programmes of meetings at Headquarters for 1964, in view of the major reconstruction work to be carried out at that office. It was essential that the item should have a high place on the agenda for the eighteenth session and be taken up at the earliest possible date, for the conference programme was normally fixed by the mid-point of each session, and adjustments could not easily be made thereafter.

5. The point was also made that it would be idle to rely blindly on some formal pattern of conferences for a solution of the problem. With the progressive expansion of activities, the number of conferences and meetings inevitably rose. On the first reading of the 1963 estimates the Committee had recommended the establishment of thirty-four new posts for the strengthening of Conference Services; that number was slight when contrasted with the temporary assistance needs that had arisen in connexion with United Nations conferences: many hundreds of temporary posts would be required for the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament and its Sub-Committee on the Discontinuance of Nuclear Weapons Tests, for the two sub-committees of the International Law Commission, for the Conference on Science and Technology, for the Conference on Consular Relations and for other meetings and conferences. As it was evident that the General Assembly would, of necessity, continue to approve the establishment of new bodies and the holding of new conferences, a realistic policy was called for, in the sense of making a more rational use of available resources. That might be achieved if the problem were tackled concurrently from several separate angles: first, Member States and United Nations organs must exercise self-restraint in regard to the number and duration of conferences and other meetings; secondly, a stringent system of priorities must be applied, particularly in regard to meetings not covered by the annual conference programme; thirdly, there must be a more effective co-ordination in the matter of conferences both within the United Nations and between the United Nations and other organizations; and fourthly, the frequency of sessions must be carefully scrutinized - that was especially true of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council.

Decision of the Committee

6. At its 966th meeting, the Committee approved the following recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/5317, para. 14):

(a) That the review of the pattern of conferences should be deferred for consideration by the General Assembly at its eighteenth session;

(b) That the provisions of resolution 1202 (XII) of 13 December 1957 should be extended for a further year, subject to the following modifications:

- (i) To permit in paragraph 2 (d), an overlap between the annual session of the International Law Commission and the summer session of the Economic and Social Council; and
- (ii) To include the Economic Commission for Africa and its subsidiary bodies within the provisions of paragraph 2 (c) of the resolution.

Recommendation of the Fifth Committee

7. The Fifth Committee therefore recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

PATTERN OF CONFERENCES

The General Assembly,

Having considered the report of the Secretary-General and the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on the pattern of conferences,^{1/}

1. Decides to continue the pattern of conferences established in resolution 1202 (XII) of 13 December 1957 for a further period of one year, until 31 December 1963;

2. Amends sub-paragraphs (c) and (d) of paragraph 2 of that resolution to read as follows:

"2 (c) The regular sessions of the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Economic Commission for Africa, as well as meetings of their subsidiary bodies may be held away from their headquarters when the commission concerned so decides, subject, in the case of regular sessions of the commissions, to the approval of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly;

"2 (d) The annual session of the International Law Commission would be held in Geneva;"

3. Invites the Secretary-General to bring to the attention of the competent organs the importance and urgency of the measures outlined in paragraph 11 of his report, as well as the need for moderation on their part in fixing their programmes of meetings at Headquarters for 1964, in view of the major reconstruction work to be carried out at that office.