



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MR. SEBASTIAN DI LUCA OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF ARGENTINA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM 137: PATTERN OF CONFERENCES, IN THE FIFTH COMMITTEE DURING THE MAIN PART OF THE 66TH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 12 October 2011)

Mr. Chairman,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 137: Pattern of Conferences.
2. The Group of 77 and China wishes to thank Mr. Shaaban Muhammad Shaaban, Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management, for introducing the Secretary-General's report on Pattern of Conferences as contained in document A/66/118 and Corrigendum 1. The Group also wishes to thank Mr. Collen V. Kelapile, Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, for introducing the report of the Advisory Committee contained in document A/66/397.
3. Further, the Group would also like to thank Ms. Woinshet Tadesse Woldegiorgis, Chairperson of the Committee on Conferences, for introducing the Committee's report as contained in document A/66/32.
4. We highly appreciate the work of the Committee on Conferences and wish to commend the Committee for the high quality of their report on their most recent substantive session. The Group welcomes the recommendations contained in the report for 2011 and believes that it will greatly facilitate the Fifth Committee's consideration of this agenda item. Similarly, the draft resolution on Pattern of Conferences submitted by the Committee, as part of their report, provides a good basis for our negotiations on this item.

Mr. Chairman,

5. The Group of 77 and China attaches great importance to the effective delivery of quality conference services, particularly in support of the work of the intergovernmental and expert bodies of the United Nations. In this context, issues such as the utilization of conference services, documentation and publication related matters, translation and interpretation related matters and the calendar of events are all critical to the functioning of this Organization.
6. The Secretary-General indicated in his report that the overall utilization of conference services for the four duty stations was 85 per cent in 2011. This was above the established benchmark of 80 per cent. The Group hopes that the Secretary-General will continue to enhance efforts to ensure standardized reporting across all four duty stations in order to present credible and comparable data to the General Assembly. The utilization rate for 2010 was 1 percentage point below the 86 per cent realized in 2009, and at par with the 85 per cent utilization in 2008. At the same time, we note concern that for the second year in a row, the utilization factor in Nairobi has decreased from 100 per cent in 2008 to 90 per cent in 2009 and was at 88 per cent in 2010. It is important that this downward spiral be reversed as a priority.

7. The Group further notes that the utilization of the conference centre at the Economic Commission for Africa dropped from 76 per cent in 2009 to 70 per cent in 2010. The Group recalls that the General Assembly has previously called on the Secretary-General to explore means to increase the utilization of the Conference Center at the ECA. We remain convinced that with more innovative and proactive marketing, utilization rates at the conference centre at the ECA could be improved notwithstanding competition from other conferencing facilities in Addis Ababa or within the region.

Mr. Chairman,

8. The Group of 77 and China attaches great importance to the timely issuance of documents and the quality of documentation to facilitate effective consideration by the intergovernmental bodies. We recognize the work done so far by the Interdepartmental Task Force on Documentation in positively addressing the problem of issuance of documents. The Group views the Task Force as one component of a multi-pronged approach to finding a solution to the perennial problem of the late issuance of documents, especially to the Fifth Committee. We remain committed to considering additional measures, where necessary, to ensure compliance to submission deadlines by all author departments, during the next session of the General Assembly in line with provisions of General Assembly resolution 64/230. The Group also emphasizes that author departments should comply with the format of reports as prescribed by General Assembly resolutions, particularly section IV, paragraph 7 to 8 of resolution 63/248, in which the Assembly reiterated its request to the Secretary-General to direct all departments of the Secretariat to include in their reports a summary of the report; consolidated conclusions; recommendations; proposed actions; relevant background information; and actionable parts in bold print.

9. We are, therefore, encouraged by indications that progress has been made in increasing the timely submission of documents, which reached 87 per cent for the first five months of 2011, for slotted pre-season documents, up from 78 per cent and 73 per cent for 2010 and 2009 respectively. We commend the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management for ensuring that all documents submitted on time and within the word limit were processed within four weeks. Every effort should be made to sustain this positive trend.

10. The Group takes note of some of the proposals by the Secretary-General, particularly that touching on document processing schedule. While the Group will carefully study the recommendation to amend the rules governing document processing to a 10-6-4 time frame, from the existing 10-4-6 time frame, we are not convinced that this measure will address the core issue here, which remains the late submission of documents by author departments. By pushing the deadline for document issuance to 4 weeks before consideration, we run the risk of exacerbating the problem of late issuance of the documents.

Mr. Chairman,

11. The Group of 77 and China stresses the importance of achieving the highest standards of quality in translation and interpretation. In this regard, the implementation of a successful succession management plan in the language services is of critical importance and urgency. The Group reiterates its support for a proactive succession planning programme, whose major components are outreach to universities and streamlining of the competitive examination for language services. We emphasize that outreach programmes should reach out to institutions from across all geographic regions which are ready to partner with the Organization.

12. The Group strongly believes that while contractual translation should result in cost savings,

quality must not be compromised. In this regard, there is a need to provide adequate internal capacity, at the appropriate level, to monitor and control the quality of documentation processed externally. The Group welcomes the proposal of the Secretary-General, contained in his Proposed Programme Budget for 2012-2013, for the upward reclassification of six p-4 posts of Reviser to P-5 and five p-4 posts of Interpreter to P-5 Senior Interpreter Level. The proposal is made pursuant to paragraph 10 of Section V of resolution 65/245 of 24th December, 2010. The proposal which has since been recommended by the ACABQ for approval will contribute to enhance quality control, but also bolster efforts to enhance recruitment and retention of language staff at UNON. The Group will closely pursue this matter during deliberations on the Proposed Programme Budget.

Mr. Chairman,

13. The Group would like to reiterate its position that the accelerated implementation of the Capital Master Plan (CMP) must not have any negative impact on the quality and availability of conference services, or the equal treatment and working conditions of language services in all six official languages. The Department of General Assembly and Conference Management should institute appropriate measures to ensure the smooth continuation of its services during the implementation of the CMP.

14. The Group also reiterates the importance of adhering to the guidelines and procedures contained in the administrative instructions for the authorization of the use of United Nations premises for meetings, conferences, special events and exhibits by Member States and the Secretariat, and emphasizes that such meetings, conferences, special events and exhibits must be consistent with the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Mr. Chairman,

15. Regarding the integrated global management initiative, the Group would like to reiterate that the purpose of the initiative was to integrate information technology into the management of the provision of conference services and documentation processing, thereby facilitating a balanced division of labour between Headquarters and the other main duty stations. In harmonizing the methods of work, care must be taken to respect the unique aspects of each duty station and language group, and also to observe the principle of equal grade for equal work. The Group reiterates that the implementation of the integrated global management must comply with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly.

16. In addition, General Assembly resolution 61/236 recognizes the importance of the meetings of the regional and other major groupings of member states and that interpretation is necessary for their smooth functioning.

17. Finally Mr. Chairman, I would like to reiterate the critical role that conference management plays in the smooth functioning of the United Nations. In this regard, the Group stands ready to work for its continued improvement. We look forward to a fruitful discussion on this important item. I assure you of the Group's constructive engagement in the discussions.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.