



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MR. MISHAL MOHAMMED AL-ANSARI, STATE OF QATAR, ON AGENDA ITEM 112: PATTERN OF CONFERENCES, AT THE FIFTH COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 13 October 2004)

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 112, Pattern of Conferences.

The Group of 77 and China would like to express its appreciation to the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences for his presentation of the Committee's report (A/59/32), as well as to the Chairman of the ACABAQ for presenting the report of the Advisory Committee (A/59/418).

We would also like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management for introducing the reports of the Secretary-General on this agenda item.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group expresses its satisfaction with the increase in the use of conference services in different duty stations as contained in the reports of the Secretary-General. The Group is looking forward to the oral presentation by the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences on the compliance with the request of the General Assembly in its resolution 57/283B, on the utilization of conference servicing resources and facilities. In this regard, the Group appreciates that the time required for informal consultations is not considered as wasted time in the current methodology.

The Group would like to recall the General Assembly's conclusion about the importance of meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States for the smooth functioning of the sessions of intergovernmental bodies. In this regard, the Group notes that for all four duty stations, namely New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi, 90 per cent of requests for interpretation were met. The Group expresses its regret to the continuous decrease in meetings provided with interpretation to regional groups. In 2003 the percentage dropped from 98 per cent to 92 per cent, and in 2004 it dropped again from 92 per cent to 90 per cent. The Group is unable to understand this failure in responding to requests made by regional groups.

In this context, the Group of 77 and China endorses the recommendation of the Committee on Conferences about the need to review the current established practice concerning the provision of interpretation services for meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States at Headquarters and other duty stations with a view to improving the provision of interpretation services to those meetings.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group wishes to express its deep concern regarding the findings contained in the report of the Committee on Conferences that the vacancy rate in translation ranged from 7.79 per cent at Geneva to 25 per cent at Nairobi, while the vacancy rate in interpretation ranged from 3.65 per cent at Geneva to 26.3 per cent at Nairobi. This delay in the filling of vacancies in the interpretation and translation sections at the United Nations Office in Nairobi and other duty stations, especially those that have been vacant for more than three years despite repeated calls by the General Assembly, should be addressed in an appropriate way in the context of accountability measures that should be taken. In this regard, the Group wishes to emphasize the importance of ensuring the equal treatment of all duty stations and calls on the Secretary-General to take the necessary steps to bring services at UNON at a level similar to other duty stations.

The Group of 77 and China emphasizes the importance of providing the highest quality of services to delegations in all duty stations and, in this regard, requests the Secretary-General to take appropriate measures in order to address current disparities in the level of services provided to delegations in such duty stations. In this regard, the Group was deeply concerned with the fact that almost half of the resources allocated to conference services at UNON are from extra budgetary funding. The Group seeks clarifications on this issue while emphasizing that immediate action should be taken to remedy this situation, and bring the financial arrangements of UNON into line with those of similar UN Offices.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group expresses its deep concern over the chronic problem of late issuance of documentation and regrets its negative impact on the legislative process. Such problems have greatly intensified during this session. Due to this situation, the Fifth Committee, in an unprecedented decision, was compelled to adopt only a two-week programme of work.

Mr. Chairman,

This fact alone suggests that time has come to give this issue a more formal consideration.

We do understand that part of the delay in the issuance of documents lies with author departments. The Group would like to draw the attention of the concerned departments to the ten-week rule for the submission of documents and strongly calls for compliance with this rule.

The Group would like to reiterate, once again, its position for strict compliance with the six-week rule for issuance of documentation. We also call upon the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management to redouble its efforts to improve coordination with the author departments and to identify and resolve the constraints that give rise to such a low rate of compliance with the six-week and ten-week rules. The need to ensure timely issuance of documents is of particular importance to small delegations to enable them reasonable time to study the reports.

In this regard the Group would like to emphasize the urgent need to develop further effective measures to strengthen the responsibility and accountability system within the Secretariat in order to ensure the timely submission of documents for processing. The Group recalls that the Secretariat has not yet submitted the comprehensive report requested on this issue requested in paragraph 7, section II(b), of General Assembly resolution 58/250.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China reaffirms Section B of its resolution 52/214 and emphasizes that any reduction in the lengths of reports should affect neither the quality of presentation nor the content of the reports and should be conducted in a non-selective manner.

The Group also considers that timely, easy and rapid access to documents in the six official languages of the United Nations is an essential element for the success of intergovernmental processes.

The Group of 77 and China stresses the importance of the summary and verbatim records in the six official languages for maintaining the institutional memory of the Organization and expresses concern over the continuous delays in their issuance.

The Group also notes with concern the violations of the rule that parliamentary documents must be distributed simultaneously in all official languages, and requests full compliance with the rules concerning the simultaneous distribution of documents in all official languages of printed copies and the posting of parliamentary documentation on the Official Document System and the United Nations web site, thus in keeping with section III, paragraph 5, of General Assembly resolution 55/222.

The Group of 77 and China takes note of the observation contained in the report of the Committee on Conferences that the Committee did not consider the proposed strategic framework for the period 2006-2007 owing to its heavy work schedule, and that it was noted that the topic would be taken up by the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly. The Group is looking forward to participating in this discussion in the context of agenda item 109, programme planning.

The Group of 77 and China intends to discuss in more specific detail the report of the Secretary-General on improving the performance of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (A/59/172) in the context of the informal consultations and to have more information and clarification on the proposals contained in the report of the Secretary-General.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.