



# General Assembly

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## Fifth Committee

### Summary record of the second part\* of the 68th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 26 June 1998, at 10 a.m.

*Chairman:* Mr. Chowdhury ..... (Bangladesh)  
*Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative  
and Budgetary Questions:* Mr. Mselle

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\* The summary record of the first part of the meeting, held on Friday, 29 May 1998, appears as document A/C.5/52/SR.68.

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*The meeting was reconvened at 10.20 a.m.*

**Agenda item 142: Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations** (*continued*)

**(a) Financing of the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations** (*continued*) (A/C.5/52/54 and A/C.5/52/55; A/C.5/52/L.54)

**Agenda item 114: Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations** (*continued*) (A/C.5/52/54; A/C.5/52/L.55)

1. **The Chairman** drew attention to a note by the Secretary-General (A/C.5/52/55) indicating the amounts to be apportioned in respect of each United Nations peacekeeping operation, including the prorated share of the support account. He took it that the Committee wished to take note of the document.

2. *It was so decided.*

*Draft resolution A/C.5/52/L.54 on the support account for peacekeeping operations*

3. **Mr. Armitage** (Australia) introduced draft resolution A/C.5/52/L.54, which his delegation had submitted on behalf of the Chairman. The salient points of the draft resolution included, *inter alia*, the approval of 400 support account-funded temporary posts for the period from 1 July 1998 to 30 June 1999 and the approval of \$34.4 million for the support account for the same period. The draft resolution also noted that the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions would submit another report on the subject in September 1998, and expressed concerns regarding the quality and timeliness of the information provided to the Committee by the Secretariat. In view of the problems encountered in negotiating an agreed text on the support account, all participants should reflect on and draw appropriate lessons from their performance in relation to that issue. Some areas that should be examined included the preparation of documentation, the dissemination of information by the Secretariat, the scheduling of meetings, the role of the coordinators of informal consultations and the interaction among delegations and between them and Secretariat officials.

4. The brackets around paragraphs 4 and 13 of the draft resolution should be removed, and paragraph 13 should begin with the words “*Takes note of*” instead of “*Notes*”. Since the draft had been adopted by consensus in informal consultations, he recommended that it should be adopted without a vote.

5. **Mr.Sial** (Pakistan) said that the reference, in paragraph 17, to the Secretary-General’s report should be accompanied by a footnote indicating the document symbol.

6. **Ms. Buergo Rodríguez** (Cuba) said she agreed with the comments made by the representative of Australia concerning the need to improve the negotiation process. She asked how the Secretariat justified the proposed approval of \$34.4 million in relation to the proposed approval of 400 support account-funded temporary posts.

7. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller) said that, although the Advisory Committee had originally recommended the amount of \$34.4 million to fund a smaller number of posts, the amount would be adequate to fund 400 posts because the vacancy rates for existing posts and for the posts to be converted were assumed to be 5 per cent and 50 per cent, respectively. Moreover, since recruitment for the new posts would not be completed until the end of February 1999, the actual vacancy rate for those posts would probably be closer to 60 per cent by the end of the biennium.

8. **Ms.Buergo Rodríguez** (Cuba) said her delegation had taken note of the Secretariat’s indication that the proposed amount of resources would be sufficient for the proposed number of posts. With respect to document A/C.5/52/54, she asked whether the information contained therein referred to gratis personnel throughout the Secretariat.

9. **Mr.Wortel** (Office of Human Resources Management) confirmed that the information in document A/C.5/52/54 covered the entire Secretariat, including the International Tribunals.

10. **Ms. Buergo Rodríguez** (Cuba) said that, since document A/C.5/52/54 related to both of the draft resolutions under consideration at the current meeting, it should be listed not only under agenda item 142 (a), but also under item 114, particularly in relation to gratis personnel.

11. *Draft resolution A/C.5/52/L.54, as orally revised and amended, was adopted.*

12. **Mr.Atiyanto** (Indonesia), speaking in explanation of position on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said he hoped that the difficulties encountered during the negotiations on the draft resolution just adopted could be avoided when the Committee continued its discussions on the basis of the complete report of the Advisory Committee. In future, the Secretariat should provide timely, reliable and complete information to facilitate the Committee’s deliberations and decisions on the important and complex matter under consideration.

*Draft resolution A/C.5/52/L.55 on gratis personnel provided by Governments and other entities*

13. **Ms. Brennen-Haylock** (Bahamas) introduced draft resolution A/C.5/52/L.55, which her delegation had submitted on behalf of the Chairman. The many delegations that had participated in informal consultations had agreed to remove the brackets from paragraphs 10 and 19. In addition, paragraph 10 should begin with the words “*Takes note of*” instead of “*Notes*”. The draft resolution strengthened the provisions of General Assembly resolution 51/243 on gratis personnel, and represented a significant step forward in that it specified a deadline for the phasing out of such personnel and approved the revised guidelines on gratis personnel.

14. As the representative of Australia had noted, the Committee’s negotiations had been hampered by the inconsistent and contradictory information provided by the Secretariat on matters pertaining to gratis personnel. The Committee could have taken a decision much sooner if it had been provided with clear, precise and reliable information at an earlier stage. She hoped that that situation would not recur in the future, and recommended that the draft resolution should be adopted by consensus.

15. *Draft resolution A/C.5/52/L.55, as orally revised, was adopted.*

16. **Mr. Atiyanto** (Indonesia), speaking in explanation of position on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the draft resolution just adopted reflected the genuine spirit of compromise and flexibility of the Member States of the Group of 77 and China, as well as their strong commitment to the Organization. However, he regretted that the Committee had been unable to take a well-informed and timely decision on the matter at the current part of the resumed session, and hoped that that would not set a precedent for the resumption of the Committee’s consideration of the issue at the third part of the resumed session. He reiterated his position that the Secretariat should consist of staff members recruited in accordance with the provisions of Articles 97, 100 and 101 of the Charter of the United Nations. General Assembly resolution 51/243, and particularly its paragraph 4, must be implemented fully. Likewise, emphasis should be placed on the need for compliance with the provisions of paragraph 9 of draft resolution A/C.5/52/L.55.

17. **Mr. Thorne** (United Kingdom), speaking in explanation of position on behalf of the European Union, the Central and Eastern European countries associated with it, the associated country Cyprus and the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area, said that the Secretariat should be properly resourced and structured to ensure the welfare and safe keeping of

United Nations forces in the field. The European Union, was deeply concerned that operational effectiveness should be ensured and the welfare of troops deployed in the field should be safeguarded. Furthermore, expertise gained over the previous year through the provision of gratis personnel should be retained as far as possible.

18. The text of each of the resolutions just adopted represented a carefully negotiated package which met the fundamental concerns of the European Union. Paragraph 9 of document A/C.5/52/L.55 requested the Secretary-General to complete the process of recruitment or redeployment of staff necessary to replace gratis personnel by the end of February 1999, paying particular attention to the continuing need for civilian police and serving military officers. Such expertise was essential for the proper functioning of those departments supporting peacekeeping operations within the Secretariat, particularly in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in the field of mission planning, and in support of the proposal for a Rapidly Deployable Mission Headquarters.

19. The European Union attached great importance to ensuring that there was no gap between the departure of gratis personnel and their replacement; that was why such attention had been paid to the inclusion of the formula requesting the Secretary-General to ensure adequate handover arrangements to provide continuity of expertise and the proper and efficient functioning of all the departments concerned.

20. The draft resolution on the support account (A/C.5/52/L.54) provided for 400 temporary posts, including 54 new positions to take account of the departure of gratis personnel. In recruiting to fill those posts, priority should be given to the selection of seconded serving military and police officers.

21. He looked forward with great interest to the completion of the work of the Advisory Committee in September 1998, since its advice would be needed. Paragraph 19 of document A/C.5/52/L.54 called for a post-by-post justification on the basis of the information called for in resolutions 51/243 and 51/239, much of which was yet to appear. If the Secretariat was able to justify a larger number of posts under the support account, then the Committee would consider its proposal. Equally, however, the Advisory Committee might conclude that fewer posts would suffice.

22. Paragraph 19 also welcomed the advice of the Secretary-General on the structure of all the departments dealing with backstopping of peacekeeping operations, including on issues of coordination and overlap. The European Union, like the Advisory Committee, remained unconvinced that the departments concerned were properly structured to meet current levels of peacekeeping activity. The

Secretariat should look again at its original support account proposal in time to present properly thought-out proposals on departmental structure to the General Assembly, through the Advisory Committee, in time to properly inform the debate in October 1998.

23. He shared the view that the discussions had been unnecessarily complicated by the provision of inadequate documentation, and he remained unconvinced that the impact of the overall decrease in peacekeeping activity in recent years had been properly analysed. The phasing out of gratis personnel presented an ideal opportunity for a fundamental rethinking of the structure of the departments concerned, and he hoped that the members of the Secretariat responsible for those issues would seize the opportunity.

24. He was confident that the draft resolutions had stated the General Assembly's wishes, and noted the explanations given by the Controller and the representative of the Office of Human Resources Management. There must be strict compliance with all aspects of General Assembly resolution 51/243. In that respect, the issue of phasing out gratis personnel was crucial. General Assembly resolution 51/243 and the draft resolutions just approved clearly set out the rules which should govern the difficult process of managing the transition, with sufficient flexibility to maintain both the operational effectiveness of peacekeeping operations and the safety of troops in the field.

25. **Mr. Sklar** (United States of America), speaking in explanation of position, said that the United States accepted the removal of gratis personnel who were not included in the exceptions granted in General Assembly resolution 51/243, and believed that the entire function of peacekeeping operations at Headquarters must be re-examined and re-evaluated in the light of the current level of peacekeeping missions. Such a review could be limited to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations or to those posts funded through the support account. The other departments and offices that backstopped peacekeeping and the functions funded from any source must all be closely examined; despite repeated requests in various resolutions, the Secretariat had not conducted a comprehensive review.

26. The issue was not whether gratis personnel would be phased out, but rather, the methodology to be applied so as to ensure continuity and avoid a loss of capability. The United States attached the utmost importance to the recruitment of serving military and civilian police officers. Military technology and doctrine evolved quickly, and it was only through the use of currently serving officers that those critical functions identified by the Secretariat could be accomplished.

27. The Secretariat should implement the Rapidly Deployable Mission Headquarters concept as soon as possible as its delay had resulted in disservice to the mission planning and execution operations. The Advisory Committee had been entrusted with reviewing information provided by the Secretariat, and he hoped that the Secretariat's previous submission would not simply be repackaged, but that full consideration would be given to all points raised during the negotiations. The United States believed that the existing and requested size and structure of the peacekeeping function in headquarters had yet to be suitably justified. Funding levels requested and appropriated for the support account were over \$4,000,000 in excess of the amount spent during the previous two years. The Secretary-General must make a commitment, at the highest level, to the comprehensive review, and provide the necessary staffing resources to the Advisory Committee to make a truly zero-based assessment of the needs of peacekeeping support.

28. The United States had assumed that the gratis personnel issue had been concluded at the end of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, with the adoption of resolution 51/243, which was carefully crafted and balanced. It had therefore seemed unnecessary to reopen negotiation of the issue at the resumed session. The United States had accepted the fact that, except in certain cases, gratis personnel would be phased out. Although that had in its view been a short-sighted decision, the United States had accepted the will of the membership, and fully supported the efforts of the Secretary-General to ensure that the functions performed by gratis personnel would be met through a variety of means.

29. His delegation looked forward to working with the Secretariat and the Advisory Committee during the review of the peacekeeping function at Headquarters. A thorough and comprehensive review would establish a base and a precedent that would prevent contentious sessions in future. The United States was committed to peacekeeping as a core operation of the United Nations, and believed that the Organization had a unique capability to provide that service. Member States must ensure that that was done as efficiently and effectively as possible.

30. **MsBuergo Rodríguez** (Cuba) said that her delegation supported the comments made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

31. She drew attention to paragraph 17 of document A/C.5/52/L.54 and paragraph 9 of document A/C.5/52/L.55, which stressed the need for continuity, taking into consideration the international nature of the Organization and the principle of geographic representation.

32. She hoped that appropriate arrangements would be made for document A/C.5/52/54 to be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session.

33. **Mr. Yamagiwa** (Japan) pointed out the difficulties created by the delayed consideration of the two agenda items under discussion. He agreed that the irregular procedure followed by the Committee on that occasion should not be allowed to establish a precedent for the future.

**Completion of the work of the Fifth Committee at the second part of the resumed fifty-second session of the General Assembly**

34. **Mr. Atiyanto** (Indonesia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, expressed sincere appreciation to the Chairman and others who had facilitated the conclusion of the negotiations.

35. He hoped the delays experienced during the second part of the resumed fifty-second session would not establish a precedent for the future work of the Committee. It was regrettable that despite the constructive spirit of the discussions, the lateness and quality of documents issued by the Secretariat had impeded timely decisions in certain instances.

36. **The Chairman** said that the negotiations on documents A/C.5/52/54 and A/C.5/52/55 had enhanced the urgency of reviewing the Committee's working methods. He had every intention of continuing consultations on those improvements, in the hope that a resolution to that end could be adopted at the third part of the resumed fifty-second session of the Fifth Committee, scheduled for 17 to 21 August 1998.

37. He declared that the Fifth Committee had completed its work for the second part of the resumed fifty-second session.

*The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.*