



# General Assembly

Seventieth session

Official Records

Distr.: General  
20 October 2016

Original: English

---

## Second Committee

### Summary record of the 38th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 14 June 2016, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Logar ..... (Slovenia)

## Contents

Agenda item 120: Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly (*continued*)

---

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be sent as soon as possible, under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, to the Chief of the Documents Control Unit ([srcorrections@un.org](mailto:srcorrections@un.org)), and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org/>).

16-09823 (E)



Please recycle A small graphic of a recycling symbol, consisting of three arrows forming a triangle.



*The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.*

**Agenda item 120: Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly** (*continued*)

1. **The Chair** said that he had called the meeting pursuant to General Assembly decision 70/548, in which the Assembly had decided that the Committee would convene a meeting early in 2016 in order to continue its discussion on the revitalization of its work. That mandate was inspired by the need to ensure that the Committee's work would contribute effectively to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and other landmark outcomes that had been adopted in 2015.

2. Four co-facilitators designated by the Chair had undertaken informal consultations on the Committee's working methods and agenda. With respect to working methods, the co-facilitators had put forward a proposal to address potential areas of improvement, including time management and submission of draft texts for consultation, as well as ideas on negotiations, plenary debates, keynote speakers, side events, joint meetings, documentation and programme budget implications. With respect to the Committee's agenda, the co-facilitators had prepared a proposal to reframe the Committee's agenda around four main areas in order to ensure that it was better aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, namely macroeconomic policy questions; sustainable development and the eradication of poverty; follow-up to United Nations conferences; and United Nations system-wide coherence. Although the informal consultations had been complex and challenging, everyone agreed that they had been necessary and timely. In both areas, the work had served to underline the strong consensus that the Committee needed to strengthen its efficiency, effectiveness and relevance in order to support the 2030 Agenda.

3. The Committee had covered a lot of ground, and now needed to reflect further on how to drive the process forward, taking advantage of the momentum achieved and ensuring that future work built on, and did not duplicate, the critical gains already made. He would provide a summary of the main points of the discussion to the incoming Chair of the Committee.

4. **Mr. Bamrungphong** (Thailand), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that even though the consultations over the past months had not resulted in a tangible outcome or conclusion, the exchange of views had been constructive. With respect to working methods, the Group had believed from the outset that General Assembly decision 65/530 was still relevant to the Committee's work, and had proposed amendments to the decision with the aim of enhancing the efficiency of the Committee's working methods and strengthening interactions between Member States and the members of the Bureau. The Group supported the Committee's tradition of adopting draft resolutions by consensus, and stressed the sovereign right of Member States to submit draft resolutions under any given agenda item. It believed that early release of the draft programme of work and the timely release of reports by the Secretariat would enhance efficiency and facilitate the preparation of draft resolutions. It also expected more action-oriented reports in accordance with the mandates given by Member States. It noted that programme budget implications were under the exclusive purview of the Fifth Committee and, on some occasions, discussion of financial issues had delayed negotiations on draft resolutions. The Group had put forward amendments to the major points in the co-facilitators' recommendations on methods of work, which, unfortunately, had not received support from development partners.

5. With respect to the Committee's agenda, the Group believed that updating and rationalizing the agenda in line with the new sustainable development framework should not necessarily lead to the elimination of agenda items, since the scope of the Committee's work was broader than the 2030 Agenda; Member States should set the Committee's agenda priorities according to their development needs. New agenda items, including cross-cutting issues such as infrastructure, water, energy, industrialization, investment, sustainable consumption and production, might arise from the new sustainable development framework. The Committee's reports should be maintained in their current form; streamlining of reporting would not allow meaningful and substantive discussion of issues. The Group reiterated that it was willing to continue the discussion on rationalizing the Committee's agenda in the General Committee or in the course of the Committee's work at the seventy-first

session on the basis of the Committee's current agenda items, and not on the co-facilitators' proposals.

6. **Mr. Parenti** (European Union) said that despite the great difficulties experienced by the Committee at the seventieth session, it had been thought that the task of facilitating a consensus on a limited number of reforms, or at least of defining a path forward, would be easy. Those hopes had not been realized, despite the efforts of European Union and many other Member States, and the Committee was at risk of becoming increasingly inefficient and irrelevant. At the commencement of the process, the European Union had been open to improving the agenda and working methods, and had seen the status quo as untenable. After months of intense discussion, two texts had emerged that, although imperfect, had been a workable solution that had deserved to be tried and tested, and eventually improved. The European Union had therefore been prepared to adopt them, but they had proven to be too ambitious for some members of the Committee.

7. The European Union welcomed the Chair's decision to submit those two texts to his successor, who would presumably pursue the matter with an even greater sense of urgency. However, the co-facilitators' texts represented the minimal outcome that could still be viewed as meaningful, and any further process would have to start from those texts and possibly improve them. The lack of consensus had cast a shadow over the Committee's upcoming session, and members would have to step up their efforts to find a *modus vivendi* that was acceptable to all Member States, in order not to put at risk the principle of consensus.

8. **Mr. Sareer** (Maldives), speaking on behalf of the members of the Alliance of Small Island States, said that the Alliance would continue to support the efforts of the President of the General Assembly to lead a broader discussion on how to align the work of all the Main Committees with the 2030 Agenda. The Committee's work was particularly important for small island developing States, as the annual resolution on the implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway fell within its purview. Small island developing States had small delegations and therefore shouldered a heavy burden, including in reporting; those States therefore had a vested interest

in ensuring that the Committee's work was effective and efficient.

9. Although a consensus had not been reached, the revitalization process had provided an opportunity to think conceptually about the purpose and role of the Committee within the United Nations and how the 2030 Agenda related to the Committee and to the United Nations as a whole. There was therefore great benefit to continuing the discussions at the seventy-first session.

10. **Ms. Wilson** (Australia) expressed disappointment that the Committee had not been able to modify its methods of work and its agenda in light of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. Her delegation recognized the importance of the Committee's work on key development, economic and social issues, but stressed that the impact of the Sustainable Development Goals on the Committee's work needed to be taken into account for it to maintain influence within the United Nations system and internationally. Otherwise, there was a risk of seriously diluting the Committee's efforts by adding to an already long list of priorities.

11. There was value in a strong Committee that provided political leadership, but the Committee would not be able to make a meaningful contribution by adopting a business-as-usual approach and must look at ways to change the way it operated. Although the attempt to revitalize the Committee's work had failed, improvement was possible with some of the tools already at the Committee's disposal, without too much change in the current rules of procedure. A number of concrete options were available, such as requiring that all draft resolutions be submitted by the deadline; restricting Committee work to the regular working hours of the United Nations; improving workflow through the early identification of programme budget implications; prioritizing draft resolutions that had to be considered at the next session; and reducing the volume of draft resolutions and the associated reporting burden, which posed particular problems for not only small but also medium-sized missions.

12. **Ms. Miyano** (Japan) said that her delegation was deeply disappointed that the revitalization process had not come to any conclusion even though the proposals of the co-facilitators had been reasonable and had taken into account the comments of all participants. Member States were responsible for facilitating the

functioning of the Committee to enable it to play its crucial role in promoting sustainable development, especially after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and other important documents. The Committee must refashion its working methods in order to be effective. It was important for all Committee members to adhere strictly to the schedule and deadlines, and for the programme budget implications of draft resolutions to be identified at an early stage. As Japan was not a member of any large negotiating group, it faced difficulties every year in keeping up with parallel negotiations and could only manage the volume of work when there was a high degree of predictability. The Committee could not lose any more time in preparing to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in order to remain central to the efforts of the United Nations to achieve sustainable development. Discussion of the Committee's agenda should therefore be concluded as soon as possible.

13. **Ms. Mendelson** (United States of America) said that her delegation was very disappointed by the failure of the revitalization process and continued to have significant concerns about the functioning and relevance of the Committee and its apparent inability to focus on priority issues in a pragmatic manner. Her delegation had raised those concerns before the start of the seventieth session as well as throughout the session, and had repeatedly stressed that the lack of dialogue between the various groups of Member States was an ongoing obstacle to the smooth functioning of the Committee and had contributed to increased mistrust and dysfunction.

14. By the closing weeks of the seventieth session, Member States had found themselves confronted with an unrealistic, undisciplined and unworkable schedule. As a result, her delegation had taken the unprecedented step of refusing to participate in the consideration of the last six draft resolutions introduced after the formal deadline for the completion of the Committee's work, and had decided not to call for a vote on those resolutions in view of the agreement among Member States to launch a revitalization process for the Committee. However, that process had ended in failure, and bureaucratic inertia and tepid platitudes had won out over measures that would have made the Committee more relevant and valuable.

15. Although some delegations had argued that the revitalization process should be seen as the first step in an ongoing process, the United States did not see the value in conducting protracted negotiations over those issues, while ignoring the very serious challenges that needed to be addressed. The co-facilitators' proposals, although imperfect, had been balanced representations of the views of all Member States; her delegation was not willing to use those proposals as a starting point for further negotiations that would simply seek to water them down even further. The Committee had an important role to play, but bold and far-reaching decisions must be made to ensure that it would be a meaningful forum for the discussion of issues of vital global concern, including the Sustainable Development Goals.

16. **Mr. Crompton** (Canada) said that his country was a firm believer in multilateralism and had therefore been encouraged by the historic accomplishments of the United Nations over the past 18 months. However, in stark contrast with those achievements, the Committee had failed in its efforts to foster greater understanding among Member States, create a space for meaningful dialogue on issues of substance, and ensure its future relevance by rationalizing and aligning its thematic agenda with the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and other relevant outcomes.

17. Canada's commitment to multilateralism and its belief in the need for the General Assembly to fulfil its mandate on issues of development had led it to consistently and repeatedly sound the alarm regarding the Committee's dysfunctionality and growing irrelevance. However, those calls had not been heeded, and as a result, the utility of the Committee was becoming impossible to discern. Canada was nevertheless ready to engage with all partners to find ways to overcome those obstacles and help create a Committee that would chart a path towards a sustainable future. Much time had been lost, and it was up to Member States to seize the moment before the commencement of the seventy-first session of the General Assembly.

18. **Ms. Loe** (Norway) expressed regret that no agreement had been reached on the measures needed to strengthen the work and relevance of the Committee. The 2030 Agenda was the roadmap for transforming the world, and it was disappointing that the Committee

had not been able to change its own working methods in order to contribute to the implementation of that Agenda. At a minimum, all Member States should strive to adhere to agreed deadlines, and to engage in constructive dialogue on the issues at an earlier stage than had previously been the case, particularly if Member States still wanted decisions to be reached by consensus. Also, any delegations that intended to put forward proposals on a regular basis should consider what was a reasonable frequency. As a relatively small mission that did not belong to any of the major negotiating groups, Norway was not able to engage actively in a large number of parallel negotiations, but did look forward to finding constructive ways to strengthen the work of the Committee.

19. **Mr. Sauer** (Finland) said that it was regrettable that not all Member States had been ready to agree on the vital issues involved in making the Committee more relevant and more fit to support the goals of the 2030 Agenda. It was particularly disappointing that no consensus had been achieved, even in the discussions on working methods, including respect for deadlines. Business as usual could not be an option for the Committee at the seventy-first session; even though no consensus had been reached, all the good work done and proposals made should not be thrown away. Finland therefore supported the Chair's recommendation that the discussion and the co-facilitators' proposals should be moved forward at that session.

20. **Ms. Frankinet** (Belgium) said that in view of the important role to be played by the Committee in the implementation and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda, the adoption of the Agenda had provided a significant opportunity to review the Committee's agenda and working methods. Although much effort had been expended, the results were very disappointing, and in the short term, that failure would leave its mark. Her delegation was prepared to devote sufficient time to consideration of the most important draft resolutions at the seventy-first session; however, despite an excellent division of work within the European Union, resources were not unlimited and might not permit detailed consideration of certain other, less important draft resolutions. That situation should not necessarily pose a problem, however, as draft resolutions that had not been discussed due to time constraints could be placed on the following year's agenda, a principle that

Belgium had unsuccessfully defended during the discussions.

21. Her delegation had always considered the revitalization of the Committee to be a self-contained exercise, even though the work of the General Assembly and its Main Committees, as well as the Economic and Social Council cycle, would need to be aligned with the 2030 Agenda. That process should be carried out in stages, through undertakings at various levels and in different bodies. An updating of the Committee's agenda on the basis of the 2030 Agenda could have made a significant contribution to that broader objective. The Committee had missed that opportunity, but must continue its efforts.

22. **Ms. Raviola-Borovik** (Russian Federation) said that her delegation believed that useful work had been done, even though it had not been possible to reach a consensus. The discussions had nonetheless fostered a mutual understanding among Member States of one another's positions, which in itself afforded an opportunity to find compromise and make positive changes in the work of the Committee. Greater political will on the part of participants would facilitate the adoption of the necessary decisions. While a comprehensive solution would be ideal, if agreement could not be reached, then even a first step towards the reform of working methods would still be valuable. The work that had been accomplished would form the basis for future negotiations with a view to making the Committee more effective, as a necessary prerequisite for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Her delegation fully supported the continuation of that work at the seventy-first session.

23. **Ms. von Steiger Weber** (Switzerland) regretted that no agreement had been reached on the revitalization of the Committee's work. The 2030 Agenda represented a major change in global development policy and would therefore significantly impact the work of the General Assembly and its Main Committees. In order to ensure an effective and systematic follow-up of that Agenda, the General Assembly and its Committees must be ready and fit for purpose.

24. Although the Committee's mandate went beyond the 2030 Agenda, its work should contribute to and support the realization of that Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. The Committee should not

renegotiate the Agendas or mandate particular follow-up and review processes. Efforts should be made to reduce, if not eliminate, duplication of work between the Committee, other Main Committees of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the high-level political forum on sustainable development. Such efforts would increase the impact and visibility of the United Nations' work on sustainable development.

25. While the proposals that had been put forward by the co-facilitator teams had been too bold for some delegations, small but important steps could be taken, such as requiring the submission of draft resolutions by the agreed deadlines, as well as undertaking a review of draft resolutions with a view to making some of them biennial, triennial or quadrennial and to merging draft resolutions addressing similar topics. No decisions should be made on review of the agenda until the outcome of the process on the strategic alignment of the agenda of the General Assembly with the 2030 Agenda was available.

26. **Mr. Shearman** (United Kingdom) said that it was essential for the components of the United Nations system to transform their working methods in order to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It was frustrating that while the Heads of State could agree to transform the world, it had proved impossible to change the Committee even a little. Such change was a matter of existential necessity and was important for demonstrating the effectiveness and relevance of the United Nations, the intergovernmental process and the work done in the Committee. The Committee's previous two sessions had been difficult, and while there had been extenuating circumstances, there had been no excuse for not being able to reach agreement on the package of changes to the agenda and working methods. That package, which had been the result of careful negotiation and compromise, had represented the bare minimum of necessary change. In the future, at the very least, deadlines should be respected and draft resolutions should be accompanied by information on programme budget implications. It was also important for the work done by the co-facilitators to be passed on to the incoming Chair.

27. **Ms. Hassan-Sharp** (New Zealand) said that the revitalization process had firmly shut certain doors, while opening other possible windows and opportunities. The first door that had been shut was

that negotiations and discussions had clearly failed, with many Member States no longer willing to engage in fruitless talks. However, that meant that the only other option was productive action. The second door that had been shut was that Member States had affirmed that business as usual was not an option. That, however, meant that change would happen, and the next Committee session would not resemble the one that had come before. The third door, which was not yet completely shut, involved the priority placed by the Committee on the principle of consensus. After six months of negotiations, consensus had not been reached on issues pertaining to procedure, as opposed to the substantive issues related to the 2030 Agenda. It needed to be asked whether consensus would help achieve the Committee's mandate and objectives; if the answer was yes, then the principle needed to be protected. If the answer was no, other options and approaches would have to be considered.

28. **Mr. Djani** (Indonesia), speaking as the newly elected Chair of the Committee for the seventy-first session, said that he would continue the good work that had been done by the current Chair. During the upcoming session, he would conduct extensive consultations with Member States to assess their expectations regarding the Committee's work, including on how to proceed with the process of revitalization. The stakes were high in the face of continuous global economic and development challenges, and given the expectations of the people of the world regarding the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Over the past 25 years, there had always been expertise, wisdom and a spirit of camaraderie in the Committee; he therefore firmly believed that the Committee would be able to find appropriate solutions.

*The meeting rose at 11:20 a.m.*