



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MR WALEED AL-SHAHARI, PERMANENT MISSION OF YEMEN TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM 132: PATTERN OF CONFERENCES, IN THE FIFTH COMMITTEE DURING THE MAIN PART OF THE 65TH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 7 October 2010)

Mr. Chairman,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 132: 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/65/122. The Group also wishes to thank Mr. Collen V. Kelapile, Vice-Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, for introducing the report of the Advisory Committee contained in document A/65/484.
3. Further, the Group would also like to thank Ms. Claudia Corti, Chairperson of the Committee on Conferences, for introducing the Committee's report as contained in document A/65/32.
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 said report for 2010 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 functioning of this Organization.
6. The Secretary-General in his report indicated that the overall utilization of conference services has remained above the established benchmark of 80 per cent. In 2009, utilization across the four duty stations was at 86 per cent, up from 85 per cent in 2008. However, we note that the utilization factor in Nairobi decreased from 100 per cent in 2008 to 90 per cent in 2009, which the Secretariat has explained to be as a result of the application of standardized statistical reporting. 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.
7. The Group notes that the utilization of the conference centre at the Economic Commission for Africa remained at 76 per cent, the same level as the previous year. We remain convinced that with more innovative and proactive marketing, utilization rates at the conference centre at the ECA

could be improved notwithstanding the anticipated 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 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 78 per cent for the first six months of 2010, for slotted pre-season documents, up from 71 per cent and 75 per cent for 2008 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 those touching on matters related to documentation and publication. While the Group will carefully study the recommendation on shifting the measurement of documents from number of pages to word count, we remain convinced that the General Assembly has already provided sufficient and adequate guidelines on the length of documents. In this regard, the Group wishes to reiterate that the quality of presentation and the substantive content of documents should not be compromised by undue emphasis on document length.

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 will therefore closely examine the proposal of the Secretary-General for a proactive succession planning programme, whose major components are outreach to universities and streamlining of the competitive examination for language services. We welcome the outreach programme to universities and training institutions that train language personnel, and at the same time emphasize that such programmes should reach out to institutions from across all geographic regions which are ready to partner with the Organization. The Group will, similarly, carefully study the proposals for raising or waiving the mandatory age of separation of language staff, however, we recognize that the issue can only be adequately addressed within the context of the discussions on Human Resources Management.

12. The Group notes with concern that the consolidated lists of individuals and entities subject to

sanctions by the Security Council are not translated into the 6 official languages, as stated in paragraph 67 of the report of the Committee in the English version. The Group attaches the utmost importance to the translation of all documents, especially of those whose implementation by Member States is required, and therefore would seek further clarification on this important matter during the informal consultations.

13. The G77 and China strongly supports the work of the UN interpreters, which allows effective multilingual communication among Member States during the proceedings of intergovernmental and expert bodies of the United Nations. In this regard, we express our concerns that in several occasions, some interpreters have expressed inappropriate comments on the statements made by Member States or by personalities through the interpretation system. The Group of G77 and China therefore, calls on the Secretariat to take all measures to avoid the repetition of these unfortunate episodes at the meetings taking place in the conference rooms of the United Nations.

14. Further, 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 therefore views with great concern the fact that the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON) is the only main duty station that lacks revisers and interpreters at P-5 level to perform this important task, even after the Organization determined that this was the appropriate level to ensure the highest standards of quality. We will keenly follow this issue when the Secretary-General submits his proposals in the context of the biennial budget for 2012-13.

Mr. Chairman,

15. 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.

16. The Group also reiterates the importance to adhere 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,

17. 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.

18. 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. The Group notes that while it would appear that 79 per cent of the requests for meetings with interpretation were actually provided with these services in 2009 as compared to 77 per cent in 2008, there was a marked increase in the number of meetings for which interpretation services were not requested. The Group will be keen to know whether meeting conveners opted not to request for interpretation services because they genuinely did not require the service or they did not request the service because they sought to avoid a situation where their request would be turned down.

19. 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 and assure you of the Group's constructive engagement in the discussions.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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