



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MRS. AICHA AFIFI, MINISTER PLENIPOTENTIARY, PERMANENT MISSION OF THE KINGDOM OF MOROCCO TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM 125: PATTERN OF CONFERENCES, BEFORE THE FIFTH COMMITTEE OF THE 58TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 14 October 2003)

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on Agenda Item 125, Pattern of Conferences.

The Group of 77 and China while reiterating, once more, its full support for the activities undertaken by the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Management, would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Jian Chen, for the introduction of the Secretary-General's relevant reports on this agenda item.

The Group of 77 and China wishes also to express its appreciation to Mr. Mohammad Tal, the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences, for his presentation of the Committee's report (A/58/32), and to Ambassador Conrad Mselle, Chairman of the ACABAQ, for the introduction of the report of the Advisory Committee (A/58/7).

Mr. Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China notes that the utilization factor of conference facilities and services has not yet reached the optimum level.

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 would like to emphasize the importance it attaches to the improvement of the current methodology so it would reflect the holding of informal consultations or any other elements affecting the utilization of conference services and facilities.

The Group notes with concern that the observation of the Secretary-General contained in paragraph 16 of its report A/58/194 proposing the consideration of reducing the time frame of a number of fully serviced meetings or the reduction of allocated services. The Group's position in this regard is that any decision of altering fully serviced meetings is the responsibility of intergovernmental bodies.

Providing interpretation services and conference facilities to regional groups contributes to the smooth functioning of the different deliberating bodies. The Group welcomes the Committee on Conferences' affirmation that the provision of conference services for meetings and consultations of regional and other major groupings of Member States, to the maximum extent possible, facilitates the work of the Main Committees of the General Assembly and other United Nations bodies. In this regard, the Group calls upon the Secretary-General to continue providing those services to the regional groups.

The Group of 77 and China expresses its concern that the rate of interpretation services and

conference facilities to the regional and other major groups has declined from 98 percent to 92 percent.

The Group expresses its concern over the apparent inadequacy of resources for conference services at Nairobi and Vienna and is looking forward to practical proposals from the Secretary-General to provide interpretation services to the regional and other major groups.

The Group wishes to draw the attention of the Committee to paragraph 16 of General Assembly resolution 57/283B where the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the cost implications of providing more predictable and adequate conference services to the meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States.

While noting the proposals made in paragraph 36 of the report of the Secretary General (A/58/194) and while reserving the right to pronounce itself on the merit and viability of these proposals, the Group considers that these proposals do not fulfill what the General Assembly has asked for in its resolution 57/283B.

We therefore stress the importance of the report that has been sought and the necessity of its prompt issuance, which we view as distinct from providing costing estimates for the aforementioned options.

The Group notes with satisfaction the information contained in paragraphs 38 to 46 of the Secretary-General's report concerning the improvements of the utilization of the facilities and services and the high occupancy rate at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). The Group endorses the request of ECA for substantial procurement of equipment so as to take advantage of the opportunities provided by meetings of other organs and bodies. The Group of 77 and China will follow up this matter under the relevant agenda item.

The Group wishes to express its concern regarding the delay in the filling of vacancies in the interpretation section at the United Nations Office in Nairobi, especially those that have been vacant for more than three years despite repeated calls by the General Assembly. 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 par with those of other duty stations. We look forward to receiving the Secretary-General's report on improving and modernization of conference services at that duty station.

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.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group notices an improvement in the timely issuance of documents for this session. However, the late issuance of some documents is still a matter of concern which requires greater efforts so as to comply with current legislative mandates.

The Group would like to reiterate, once again, its position for strict compliance with the six-week rule for issuance of documentation.

The timely issuance of reports greatly enhances the quality of the decision-making process throughout the Organization. The Group has been informed that part of the delay in the issuance of

documents is caused by the author departments. The Group would like to emphasize the need to comply with the ten-week rule for the submission of documents for processing so as to eliminate the negative impact of the late issuance of documents.

The Group would like to emphasize operative paragraph 20 of resolution 57/300 which stipulated that any consolidation of reports should be decided on by the Main Committees of the General Assembly.

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.

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

The Group of 77 and China considers that it is highly important to preserve the institutional memory of the Organization. In this context, the Group of 77 and China stresses the importance of expediting the issuance of summary and verbatim records in the six official languages.

The Group of 77 and China stresses the need to strengthen the capacity of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management in order to fulfill its mandates in an efficient and effective manner.

The Group of 77 and China looks forward to the informal consultation on this agenda item and is ready to engage in a constructive dialogue with all our partners.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.