

Statement by Morteza Mir Mohammad (Islamic Republic of Iran) on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, on agenda item 124: Pattern of Conferences, before the Fifth Committee of the 56th session of the United Nations General Assembly

New York, 23 October 2001

Mr. Chairman,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on Agenda Item 124, Pattern of Conferences.
2. 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/56/32).
3. We would also like to welcome the new Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services and thank him for introducing the reports of the Secretary-General on this agenda item. The Group reiterates its full support for the activities undertaken by the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services (DGAACS).

Mr. Chairman,

4. The Group expresses its appreciation for the continued inclusion in the reports of the Secretary-General of meeting statistics of United Nations bodies and regional and other groupings, including for meetings held at the United Nations Office at Nairobi. The Group also notes with appreciation that during 2000 the overall utilization factor of conference services here at United Nations Headquarters and at the other three (3) duty stations at Geneva, Nairobi and Vienna had exceeded the 80% benchmark. We further note the information that 62% of a core sample of bodies that had met in New York, Geneva, Nairobi and Vienna had utilized 80% or more of their available conference-servicing resources, an increase of 3% points over 1999.
 5. Regarding the utilization of conference facilities at the United Nations at Nairobi, we welcome the information that, in addition to the establishment of the Division of Conference Services at Nairobi as of 1 September 2000, a permanent interpretation service was also created at Nairobi, in response to the decision of the General Assembly in resolutions 54/248 and 54/249 both of 23 December 1999. The Group had always emphasized the importance of the United Nations Office at Nairobi, as the only United Nations Centre in the developing world, and that this Office should be accorded the same status as other United Nations centers elsewhere.
 6. We would like to highlight once more that increased efforts must be made to strengthen the capacity and increase the utilization of conference-servicing facilities at Nairobi. The remaining vacancies for the posts of interpreters in the Interpretation Service at Nairobi should be filled expeditiously. The Group concurs with the conclusions and recommendations contained in paragraphs 50 to 53 of the report of the Committee on Conferences.
- Mr. Chairman,
7. The Group of 77 and China remains concerned by the chronic problem of late issuance of documentation, and we reiterate, our position for strict compliance with the six-week rule for issuance of documentation. We understand that part of the delay in the issuance of documents lies with author departments. The Group draws the attention of the concerned departments to the ten-week rule for the submission of documents and strongly calls for compliance with this rule so as to eliminate the negative impact of late submission of documents on their timely issuance.

8. We also call upon the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services to redouble its efforts to improve coordination with author departments and to identify and resolve the constraints that give rise to such a low rate of compliance with the six-week rule. This is particularly important for small delegations to have ample time to consider the reports. The Group endorses the conclusions and recommendations contained in paragraphs 100 and 101 of the report of the Committee on Conferences.

9. Furthermore, the Group has always stressed the need to strengthen the capacity and capability of the Document Control Section so as to enable this Section to better perform its functions of coordinating the processing of all documents. In this regard, the Group notes with keen interest the conclusions and recommendations contained in paragraphs 93 and 94 of the report of the Committee on Conferences.

10. On the basis of the information previously provided by the ACABQ in the Committee's report (A/54/7) for the programme budget for 2000-2001, the Group recalls that it had also expressed its concern and questioned the rationale for the reduction of the resources proposed for the DGAACS for the previous biennium.

11. Whilst noting that the resources proposed for the DGAACS for the biennium 2002-2003 reflect a modicum increase of 2.0% compared to the previous biennium, we are however doubtful that these resources are adequate, particularly in light of the comments provided in paragraph I.38 of the ACABQ report (A/56/7). The Group intends to revert to the issue of resources in the context of discussions under item 123, taking into full account the information provided in paragraphs I.25 to I.77 of the report of the ACABQ.

Mr. Chairman,

12. In conclusion, the Group of 77 and China would like to stress the importance of provision of conference services, in particular interpretation, to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States. Whilst the Group is in full agreement with the requirement that priority needs to be accorded to meetings of the Charter and other mandated bodies, the Group also believes the importance of providing full conference-servicing to meetings of regional and other major groupings cannot be ignored. As recognized by the General Assembly, such meetings are crucial in the smooth functioning of the organization.

13. The Group notes with satisfaction that the percentage of requests met for provision of interpretation for meetings of regional and other groupings of Member States held in New York rose steadily from 84% to 90% for the period July 2000 to June 2001, and that overall, for all the four duty stations, 92% of requests for interpretation had been met. We urge for further efforts to be made in this regard, including the implementation of some of the measures recommended by the Committee on Conferences in paragraphs 86 and 87 of its report.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.