

**Statement by the Representative of Venezuela, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, on agenda item 116: Pattern of Conferences, before the Fifth Committee of the 57th session of the United Nations General Assembly**

**New York, 24 October 2002**

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Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on Agenda Item 116, Pattern of Conferences.

We would also like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Management 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.

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/57/32), as well as to the Chairman of the ACABAQ for presenting the report of the Advisory Committee (A/57/472).

Mr. Chairman,

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 statistics for meetings held at the United Nations Office at Nairobi.

The Group of 77 and China particularly welcomes the efforts made in increasing the utilization of the conference center at Bangkok, and notes the positive projections for the future.

We fully concur with the conclusion by the Committee on Conferences that the loss of conference services resources, for whatever reason, should not be encouraged. The Group urges that the chairpersons and the bureaus of concerned bodies to ensure that there is better planning and coordination in the utilization of conference services in order to avoid waste, and encourages the Committee on Conferences to continue monitoring the situation and to forward its recommendations to the General Assembly in this regard.

Mr. Chairman,

Regarding the utilization of conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, the Group welcomes the information that, as a result of the establishment of a permanent interpretation service, the number of events held at UNON increased by 10%, and the meetings at which interpretation services had been provided had increased by 23.5% during 2001.

There is no doubt, Mr. Chairman, that the establishment of a permanent interpretation service at UNON has, in recent years, attracted many major events and increased utilization of the facility at Nairobi. It should therefore be inevitable that the severe shortage of meeting space should be experienced. It was for this reason that the General Assembly had requested for the modernization of the facilities at UNON to alleviate this challenge taking into account that the UN Office at Nairobi is the only UN Office in the developing world. Therefore, the Group would like to know the status of the implementation of the General Assembly's request in this regard.

In addition, Mr. Chairman, vacant posts in the Interpretation Service at the United Nations Office in Nairobi have not been filled, as required in paragraph 9 of part IV of General Assembly resolution A/RES/56/242. The Group would like to have more explanations on this matter.

Mr. Chairman,

Given the recurrent chronic problem of late issuance of documentation, the impact of which has greatly intensified during this session, 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 affects the quality of the decision-making process throughout our Organization. We do understand that part of the delay in the issuance of documents lies with author departments. The Group would like to draw 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.

We also call upon the Department of General Assembly Affairs to redouble its efforts to improve coordination with the author departments and to identify and resolve the constraints that give rise to such a low rate of compliance with the six-week and ten-week rules. The need to ensure timely issuance of documents is of particular important to small delegations to enable them reasonable time to study the reports.

The G-77 and China reaffirms that any reduction in the lengths of reports should not affect either the quality of presentation nor the content of the reports and should be conducted in a non-selective manner.

The Group of 77 and China considers that it is highly important to preserve the institutional memory of the Organization. The Group also considers that timely, easy and rapid access to documents in the six official languages of the United Nations is an essential element for the success of intergovernmental processes.

The Group of 77 and China stresses the importance of the summary and verbatim records in the six official languages for maintaining the institutional memory of the Organization and expresses concern over the continuous delays in their issuance.

The Group of 77 and China would like to receive more information on the proposal by the Department of General Assembly Affairs to transfer editors/translators from the editing section of official documents to translation services. The Group would like also to know the possible effect of such a proposal on its ability to issue documents and on the accuracy aspect of translating official documents.

The Group of 77 and China would like to stress that the proposed structural changes of the Department for General Assembly Affairs should in no way affect negatively the production and distribution of documents or the access by delegations and State representatives to these documents in the present form in all six official languages simultaneously.

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

Mr. Chairman,

In regards to the proposal contained in paragraph 15 of the report A/57/289, to comply strictly to the programming of meetings with the calendar of conferences and meetings approved by the General assembly, the Group concurs with the recommendation of ACABQ in paragraph 6 of its report A/57/472, to caution against imposing too strict rule. Instead we favor a pragmatic approach in order not to introduce unnecessary restrictions on the ability of an intergovernmental body or conference to reach a successful conclusion as

ACABQ stated.

The Group endorses the proposal of the Secretary General in paragraph 34 of its report A/57/228 that, in order to put interpretation services for meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States on a more predictable and formal basis and to avoid daily scheduling difficulties, corresponding expenses be included in the programme budget for the next biennium 2004-2005.

The Group notes the intention to transfer the 5th and 6th Committee technical servicing secretariats to the Department of General Assembly Affairs. In this regard, the Group requests more clarification on how the substantive and technical capacity required for these secretariats would be kept in the new system.

The Group of 77 and China intends to discuss in more specific detail the report of the Secretary-General on improving the performance of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services (A/57/289) in the context of the informal consultations and to have more information and clarification on the proposals contained in the report of the Secretary-General.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.