How is the Bureau elected?

The Chair of the Fifth Committee is elected by the General Assembly on the basis of regional rotation. The rapporteur comes from the regional group that held the chair of the Committee the previous year. The three remaining regional groups take the positions of Vice-Chairs. This is in accordance with rule 30 of the rules of procedure whereby the General Assembly holds elections at least three months before the opening of the session.

What is the process used for submitting draft resolutions?

Once general discussion of an item has finished in formal meetings, the Committee holds informal consultations (with interpretation) under the chairmanship of a designated coordinator. Informal consultations begin with question-and-answers with the relevant Secretariat officials. The coordinator then distributes a basic draft proposal for consideration by the Member States.

The coordinator requests delegations to provide contributions for inclusion in the text by a deadline. The Committee then considers the draft proposed by the coordinator, containing the inputs received, in informal consultations. Some items require lengthy negotiations and, where difficulties arise, the Committee resorts to informal informals (without interpretation). When consensus emerges, the proposals are "adopted" in an informal meeting and only then are they issued in the "L" series for action. After draft resolutions or decisions are issued as "L" documents, they are adopted at a formal meeting of the Committee, before being taken up at the plenary of the General Assembly.

How does the Fifth Committee reach agreement?

In paragraph 7 of section II of its resolution 41/213 of 19 December 1986, the General Assembly considered it “desirable that the Fifth Committee... should continue to make all possible efforts with a view to establishing the broadest possible agreement” on the outline of the programme budget before submitting its recommendations to the General Assembly.

In considering agenda items and questions every effort is made to reach consensus before resorting to a vote. For political considerations this is applied not only to the outline of the programme budget but also to all other draft resolutions and decisions. This process often requires lengthy negotiations. Only on very rare occasions has the Fifth Committee adopted a proposal by vote.

How is the work of the Fifth Committee structured?

In keeping with General Assembly resolution 46/220 the Fifth Committee has biennialized a number of items. Odd years are budget years where the biennial programme budget is discussed. In Off-budget years the Committee considers the Programme Plan.

The work of the Fifth Committee is very fluid, often having to accommodate last minute additions of urgent reports. The Committee follows the guidelines given by the General Assembly but it is not always possible. The Fifth Committee's ability to complete its work in a timely fashion is also subject to the completion of work by the other Main Committees so that the Fifth Committee is able to consider any PBIs arising from their work.

Why does the Fifth Committee have three sessions?

Over the past 10 years, the Fifth Committee has held at least three sessions a year. During the main part of the session of the General Assembly the Committee considers items that are time bound. A number of issues that do not require immediate consideration often remain on the agenda and are postponed to the first part of the resumed session, which is normally held for a period of three or four weeks in March, depending on the workload. According to the timetable endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 49/233 A of 23 December 1994 , the Committee resumes its work annually for a period of four weeks in May to consider the administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of peacekeeping operations and any other questions or items that the Committee needs to consider.

What is the relationship between the Fifth Committee and the ACABQ?

The ACABQ is a subsidiary body of the General Assembly. Rule 157 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly explains the role of the ACABQ:

"The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions shall be responsible for expert examination of the programme budget of the United Nations and shall assist the Administrative and Budgetary Committee (Fifth Committee)."

In budget years, the ACABQ submits to the General Assembly a detailed report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium. In addition it submits reports on the accounts of the United Nations and all United Nations entities for which the Secretary-General has administrative responsibility.

The ACABQ makes observations, conclusions and recommendations on the proposals made by Secretary-General. It also examines on behalf of the General Assembly the administrative budgets of the specialized agencies and proposals for financial arrangements with such agencies and considers and reports to the General Assembly on the auditors' reports on the accounts of the United Nations and of the specialized agencies. The programme of work of the Committee is determined by the requirements of the General Assembly and the other legislative bodies to which the Committee reports.

The Fifth Committee may accept, curtail or reject the recommendations of the ACABQ. The conclusions and recommendations of the ACABQ often form the basis of the draft resolutions and decisions recommended by the Fifth Committee.

How does the Fifth Committee work with the General Assembly and its other Main Committees?

Rule 153 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly explains the relationship between the General Assembly and the Fifth Committee.

No resolution involving expenditure can be recommended by one of the Main Committees for the General Assembly unless the Secretary-General has prepared an estimate of how much it will cost. The General Assembly cannot vote on any such resolution until the Fifth Committee has considered the effect of the proposal upon the budget estimates of the United Nations. In addition, the Main Committees need to ensure that there is time for the ACABQ to consider the Secretary-General's estimates.

Regulation 5.9 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget also states that no body can take a decision involving either a change in the budget approved by the General Assembly or possible expenditure unless tit has taken account of the a report from the Secretary-General on the budget implications of the proposal.

On certain occastions Main Committees draft resolutions using the phrase "within available resources". The ACABQ in their report A/54/7 expressed concern about the this phrase and its potential impact on the use of resources. The ACABQ, in the same report, also stressed that the Secretariat should accurately inform the General Assembly and its Main Committees about whether there are enough resources to implement any new activity.

What is a PBI?

PBI stands for programme budget implication. A PBI is a statement detailing the administrative, financial and programmatic changes that the adoption of a draft resolution would entail. Once a PBI is issued the ACABQ will also provide their observations for the Fifth Committee to consider.

At least 48 hours are required before action can be taken on a draft resolution containing budgetary implications so that the Secretary-General can prepare the PBI and the ACABQ can consider it. For this reason, there is a deadline of no later than 1 December for draft resolutions with financial implications to be submitted to the Fifth Committee.

What is a revised estimate?

This is an estimate of additional resources submitted by the Secretary-General relating to: (a) items not included in the proposed programme budget owing to the unavailability of information at the time of preparation of the proposed programme budget; (b) items that were included in the proposed programme budget but on which the General Assembly did not act but requested further information; and (c) developments that took place after the preparation of the proposed programme budget.

What elections take place in the Fifth Committee?

Elections for appointments or confirmation of appointments to the following subsidiary bodies and committees take place in the Fifth Committee:

The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

The Board of Auditors

The Committee on Contributions

The Investments Committee

UN Administrative Tribunal

United Nations International Civil Service Commission

Independent Audit Advisory Committee

United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund

Vacancies are usually announced in early March. Announcements are contained in notes issued by the Secretary-General under the agenda item Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments.

Member States then propose candidates and inform the Secretary General. The bureau of the incoming session will propose a date for the elections to be held (usually the first Friday in November) and a deadline for submission of candidatures.

Details of candidatures and other information on elections is available on CandiWeb at the following address: https://eroom.un.org/eRoom/UNHQ01/Candiweb/0_1c31f. Instructions to access the Web page can be obtained by emailing Missions-Support@un.int or eroom-admin@un.org or Fax: (212) 963-0952

The conduct of elections is governed by Articles 18 and 19 of the Charter and rules 92, 93, 94 and 95 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly.