

23 November 2004

**Fifty-ninth session
Third Committee**

Text submitted by the Chairman on the basis of informal consultations

Revitalization of the work of the Third Committee

Recalling General Assembly resolutions 58/126 of 19 December 2003 and 58/316 of 1 July 2004 on the revitalisation of the work of the General Assembly, the Third Committee approves the text related to its work contained in the annex to the present document.

Annex

A. Review of the agenda of the Third Committee

1. Taking into account the customary agenda of the Third Committee and the joint consideration of some of its items, it is decided that:

(a) The items entitled “Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly”, “Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family” and “Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing”, shall be merged into one new agenda item, as follows:

Item: Social development:

- (a) Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly;
- (b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family;
- (c) United Nations Literacy Decade: education for all;

(d) Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing;

(b) The sub-item entitled "United Nations Literacy Decade: education for all" shall continue to be considered on a biennial basis;

(c) The items entitled "Crime prevention and criminal justice" and "International drug control", while remaining separate, shall continue to be considered jointly;

(d) The items entitled "Advancement of women" and "Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled 'Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the 21st century'" shall be merged into one new agenda item, as follows:

Item: Advancement of women:

(a) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly;

(e) The item entitled "Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions" shall continue to be considered individually;

(f) The item entitled "Follow-up to the special session on children", normally considered in the plenary of the General Assembly, and the item entitled "Promotion and protection of the rights of children" shall be merged into one new agenda item and be considered in the Third Committee, as follows:

Item: Promotion and protection of the rights of children:

(a) Follow-up to the special session on children;

(g) The item entitled "Programme of activities for the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, 1995-2004" shall be renamed "Indigenous issues";

(h) The item entitled "Elimination of racism and racial discrimination" and its sub-item entitled "Comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action" shall continue to be considered as one item, as follows:

Item: Elimination of racism and racial discrimination:

(a) Comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action;

(i) The sub-items entitled "Implementation of human rights instruments", "Human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms", "Human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives", "Comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action" and "Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights" shall be merged into one new agenda item, as follows:

Item: Promotion and protection of human rights:

- (a) Implementation of human rights instruments;
- (b) Human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- (c) Human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives;
- (d) Comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.

2. The Third Committee is convinced that the item entitled "Global road safety crisis" should be considered in all its aspects in a comprehensive manner. Further, the Committee is of the view that its mandate to consider the item is limited. The Committee recommends that the item be considered in the plenary of the General Assembly, or be allocated by the Assembly to another Main Committee.

B. Working methods of the Third Committee

3. With a view to enhancing participatory and interactive discussions:

(a) Executive heads of agencies, funds and programmes, representatives of the Secretary-General, special procedures and, where appropriate, chairpersons of human rights treaty bodies shall introduce their reports at the commencement of the debate on items. Interactive discussions and question times shall be held with those personalities as part of the formal proceedings. The Secretariat is requested to provide the Third Committee with a list of participants prior to the debates, in order to facilitate delegations' preparations for the question time.

(b) The Third Committee will introduce, on a pilot basis, at its sixtieth session, interactive debates in an informal setting, on the understanding that the Committee will not meet at the same time. Any such sessions should be held within the existing budget allocated for Third Committee meetings and should not result in the expansion of the Committee's schedule of work. Interactive debates shall be organized in consultation with Member States.

4. With a view to taking action on more concise, focused and action-oriented resolutions, preambular and operative paragraphs shall be concise, focused and designed to have an impact on policy development.

5. Member States are encouraged to table resolutions, when appropriate, biennially or at longer intervals.

6. Recalling part D, paragraph 4 (c), of resolution 58/316 of 1 July 2004 and the letter dated 8 October 2004 from the President of the General Assembly addressed to the Chairman of the Third Committee (A/C.3/59/1/Add.2), the report of the Economic and Social Council shall be considered in its entirety in the plenary of the General Assembly. With regard to those parts of the report which coincide with agenda items allocated to the Third Committee, resolutions and decisions adopted by the Council shall only be forwarded to the Committee for final action by the Assembly when the latter is required to consider issues related to mandates, additional appropriations or other related matters. In this regard, there should be close informal communications between the Chairman of the Third Committee and the President of the Economic and Social Council.

7. With a view to reducing duplication, Member States within the Third Committee are encouraged to avoid duplication in the presentation of resolutions and decisions, in particular those that have already been adopted by the Economic and Social Council or its subsidiary bodies.
8. The deadline for submission of proposals tabled under the first agenda item shall be the same as the deadline for submission of proposals under the second agenda item considered by the Committee. Member States presenting proposals should aim at concluding informal consultations early enough to meet the tabling deadline.
9. Member States should make every effort to reduce the number of requests for reports from the Secretary-General, inter alia, by considering requesting consolidated reports prepared in accordance with resolution 57/300 of 20 December 2002. There should be no automaticity in requesting reports of the Secretary-General. Reports should only be requested when they would assist in taking stock of developments on a particular issue.
10. Reports shall be issued in strict compliance with the six-week rule for the distribution of documents simultaneously in the six official languages of the United Nations. Reports shall be substantive and analytical, in order to provide the General Assembly with useful elements for its consideration of items. Focus should be kept on recent developments, progress made, challenges, conclusions and recommendations.
11. In order to enable delegates' access to documents for the beginning of each meeting and avoid delaying the commencement of meetings, documentation should be made available for distribution in the meeting room 15 minutes prior to the start of the meeting.
12. With a view to expediting information-sharing and promoting efficient and cost-effective work, the web site of the Third Committee should be further developed and utilized. Member States and observers are encouraged to post documents, including draft resolutions and statements made in the general debate, on the web site.
13. The Third Committee should consider closer collaboration and cooperation with other Main Committees to identify and address issues that are also under the consideration of those Committees, while respecting the division of responsibilities. In this regard, joint panel discussions and meetings may be held on issues of common interest.
14. The Third Committee should also take into account the experience and best practices of other Main Committees in improving its methods of work.
15. The Third Committee shall continue to examine ways to revitalize its work and take appropriate action by consensus in that regard.
