

PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**Statement of Ms. Yotam Goren, Chair, Committee on Conferences
at the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly
on 20 October 2014 at 10:00am in Conference Room 3**

Agenda item: Pattern of conferences

Mr. Chair, distinguished colleagues,

It is my privilege to address the Fifth Committee to introduce the report of the Committee on Conferences, which covers its work in 2014 and was adopted by the Committee during its recently concluded substantive session from 2 to 8 September 2014. The report, as contained in document A/69/32, together with a draft resolution in annex I and the draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings of the United Nations for 2015 in annex II, are being transmitted through the Fifth Committee and recommended for adoption by the General Assembly.

The Committee on Conferences considered the report of the Secretary-General on pattern of conferences (A/69/120), which was issued six weeks before the beginning of its substantive session in accordance with the mandated time frame and was within the 8,500 word limit for reports originating in the Secretariat. Statistical data were presented as supplementary information. The Committee again conducted its substantive session in a paper-smart fashion. All official pre-session, in-session, information and reference documents were posted on a dedicated website. The Secretariat provided laptops on loan and technical support in the meeting room, in addition to print-on-demand services.

Mr. Chair,

The Committee's report reflects comprehensively the discussions on all items in its annotated agenda (A/AC.172/2014/1/Rev.1). As you know, the Committee's substantive session affords Member States an opportunity to engage actively with the leadership and staff of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management on all matters relating to conference management and to seek additional information and clarification as necessary in order to provide direction, guidance and support to the Secretariat in carrying out the mandates entrusted to it by the General

Assembly. Allow me to highlight some of these issues.

In **Chapter I**, on organizational matters, you will note that the Committee now has full membership.

Chapter II deals with matters related to the calendar of conferences and meetings. The Committee reviewed the draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings of the United Nations for 2015 and recommended for adoption by the General Assembly.

Under Chapter II B, the Committee had before it a letter dated 30 June 2014 from the representatives of 32 Member States addressed to the Chair of the Committee (A/AC.172/2014/3). The Committee decided to consider the letter under agenda item 2(b).

The Committee recommended to defer the request contained in the letter to the Fifth Committee and requested the Secretary-General to report to the Fifth Committee during the main part of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly on the modalities and criteria for approving additional official holidays of the United Nations.

In **Chapter III A**, on meetings management, the Committee reviewed the statistical data presented on the utilization of conference-servicing resources and facilities at the four duty stations and at the conference centre at the Economic Commission for Africa. I presented an oral report on my mandate as Chair to hold consultations with the four intergovernmental bodies that had utilized less than the benchmark of 80 per cent of their allocated resources for the past three consecutive years from 2011 to 2013. I met with the representatives of the Committee on Contributions, the Committee on Information and the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations. Due to the unavailability of the President of the UNICEF Executive Board, the Secretary of the Committee on Conferences held a separate consultation with the Assistant Secretary of the UNICEF Executive Board.

I am pleased to report that the Chair of the Committee on Contributions had employed all of the suggestions made by my predecessor, Ms. Chamithri Rambukwella and the CoC Secretariat to improve utilization in 2014: reducing the number of planned meetings from 30 meetings to 22 meetings to bring

the programme of work in line with the Committee's past practice and actual utilization of conference services; and cancelling interpretation services for an additional four meetings at a point in the session when informal consultations could be expected; and reducing to two hours the time required for two further meetings when the programme was predictably lighter. As a result the Committee on Contributions improved its utilization factor from 71 in 2013 to 88 per cent in 2014.

Following my consultations with the Committee on Information, the Vice-Chair of the Committee on Information agreed to make greater effort to start meetings on time, and to consider reducing meeting blocks to two hours, for example from 11 am to 1pm and 4pm to 6pm at points in the programme where Members are likely to need time to consult with each other informally before a meeting opens. As a result the utilization factor of the Committee on Information went up from 65 per cent in 2013 to 75 per cent in 2014.

I would also like to report that the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and its Working Group made considerable efforts and improvements ahead of its 2014 session and, as a result, brought its utilization factor up from 51 per cent in 2013 and 45 per cent in 2012 to 79 per cent in 2014 – a remarkable improvement. The Special Committee and its Working Group have adopted several of the measures suggested by the Meetings Management Section prior to its 2014 session: reviewing its past meeting pattern and reducing the number of planned meetings by nearly 40 per cent. My meeting in June with a representative of the Chair of the Working Group included a discussion on additional measures to be taken to reach the 80 per cent utilization benchmark in 2015.

The Secretary of the Committee on Conferences informed me that the Assistant Secretary of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund had agreed to raise the matter with the Board's Bureau in order to gain their support and awareness of the need for more efficient utilization, and to encourage the Bureau to reduce the number of meetings where feasible in light of past patterns of utilization. The Assistant Secretary also suggested that his office could benefit from meetings with other Secretariats to learn from their experiences – a positive suggestion which the CoC Secretariat has begun to facilitate.

Again this year, in response to paragraph 14 of GA resolution 68/251, those bodies that

consistently underutilized conference resources for the past 10 years were identified and the Secretariat of the Committee on Conferences made specific suggestions to the Secretariat of each body on how to improve its utilization. This is reflected in the report of the Secretary-General on the pattern of conferences.

Since 2013, meeting services reports have been sent to the presiding officers and the secretariats of all calendar bodies before and immediately after their scheduled sessions. Such reports provide statistical data on the utilization factor for the previous 10 years and include suggestions for improvement whenever necessary. Client feedback is actively sought to help identify specific ways to improve the utilization factor.

Mr Chair,

Chapter III B deals with the impact of the capital master plan, strategy IV (phased approach) on meetings held at Headquarters during its implementation. The Committee on Conferences was informed that the lessons learned from the early phases of the capital master plan had been implemented in the renovation of the General Assembly Building. The Committee discussed the need to continue to improve adequate information technology support for conferences as well as access to and use of conference services and facilities for persons with disabilities.

Chapter IV contains the Committee's discussions on issues relating to integrated global management. The global document management system, gDoc had been rolled out in New York and Geneva in May 2014. The Computer-assisted translation suite, gText had been rolled out in New York and Vienna and was being launched in Geneva. The data warehouse, gData would be fully operational by the end of 2014. All four duty stations are using gMeets to manage their meeting resources.

In section III, paragraph 56, of its draft resolution, the Committee reiterated its request to the Secretary General to provide information about the financial savings achieved through the implementation of the integrated global management projects in his next report on the pattern of conferences..

Mr. Chair,

Chapter V deals with documentation and publication-related matters. The Committee discussed digitization of older United Nations documents. The Department of Public Information provided the Committee with information regarding criteria for selection of documents, technology used and expertise required for the task. Delegations remained concerned about the late issuance of certain documents for the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly. At the requests of delegations, updated information on the PaperSmart initiative was provided by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management.

Mr. Chair, distinguished colleagues,

Chapter VI deals with translation and interpretation-related matters. The Committee requested the Secretary-General to redouble his efforts to ensure the highest quality of interpretation and translation in all six official languages.

The Committee requested the Secretary-General to make further concerted efforts to promote outreach programmes, such as traineeships and internships, and to introduce innovative methods to increase awareness of the programmes, including through partnerships with Member States, relevant international organizations and language institutions in all regions, in particular to close the wide gap in Africa and Latin America.

Also, the Committee reiterated its request to the Secretary General to provide at all duty stations, adequate staff at the appropriate level, with the view to ensure appropriate quality control for external translation, with due consideration of the principle of equal grade for equal work.

Before I conclude, Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the Bureau and members of the Committee, as well as the observers, for participating actively and constructively during the Committee's session, which enabled the Committee to have meaningful and productive discussions in an open and friendly manner. I hope that we can continue to work in the same spirit during the Fifth Committee's

consideration of the item on pattern of conferences.

I also wish to express on behalf of myself, the Bureau and members of the Committee on Conferences, our gratitude to Mr. Gettu, Under-Secretary-General of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, Mr. Baumann, former Assistant-Secretary-General, the Secretariat of the Committee and all the staff of the Department, in addition to the conference management staff at the other duty stations, for providing substantive and technical support to the Committee throughout the year, and especially during its substantive session.

To all my colleagues in the Fifth Committee, I wish to present the report of the Committee on Conferences, together with the draft resolution and draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings for 2015, for your consideration and recommendation to the General Assembly.

I thank you, Mr. Chair.
