



**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA
BY MS. SONDRA CHEONG, FIRST SECRETARY OF THE COOPERATIVE
REPUBLIC OF GUYANA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM 144:
PATTERN OF CONFERENCES, AT THE FIFTH COMMITTEE DURING THE
MAIN PART OF THE SEVENTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

(NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 9TH, 2020)

Mr. Chair,

1. I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 144: Pattern of Conferences.
2. The Group wishes to thank H.E. Ambassador Soufiane Mimouni, Chair of the Committee on Conferences and Mr. Abdallah Bachar Bong, Chair of the Advisory Committee for Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), for introducing their respective reports. We also wish to thank the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management, Mr. Movses Abelian, for introducing the report of the Secretary-General.
3. The Group takes this opportunity to express its appreciation to Ambassador Mimouni of Algeria, for his leadership as the Chairperson of the Committee on Conferences for 2020.
4. The Group of 77 and China would also like to express its gratitude to the staff of the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management, across all duty stations for their efforts alongside other key departments of the UN Secretariat, not only for their traditional support, but especially for their efforts this year in the face of a global pandemic.

Mr. Chair,

5. The Group commends the Committee on Conferences for the work undertaken during its substantive session in 2020 and for the quality of its report, notwithstanding the virtual setting in which deliberations had to be carried out due to the ongoing pandemic. This report will greatly benefit the Committee's consideration of this agenda item. Similarly, we are of the view that the proposed draft resolution will serve as a good framework for the consideration of this item.
6. The Group commends the efforts of the Secretariat to address the underutilization of conference servicing resources and facilities by UN organs in 2019. The Group notes that the overall utilization of interpretation resources increased from 82 to 84 percent; and in documentation, submission compliance

rose from 90 to 93 percent and processing compliance from 98 to 99 per cent. We also note that communication between other departments and DGACM is a key element for the timely publication of reports and that more efforts are required in this area, especially concerning reports to be presented to the Fifth Committee.

7. The Group is pleased to learn that the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy is being implemented across all duty stations, and we look forward to learning more about the implementation of all of the 10 JIU recommendations regarding accessibility to conference services for persons with disabilities.

Mr. Chair,

8. The Group is aware that the liquidity shortage faced by the Organization has been compounded by the impact of this pandemic, all of which have strengthened the austerity measures that the Secretary General has been enforcing since January 2019. This has led to a freeze in hiring which particularly affects the staff in the language services. Despite this, we commend the steps taken to enhance the recruitment of language professionals, including by increasing outreach to universities as a means of addressing the gap of qualified candidates from Africa and the Latin American and Caribbean region.
9. The pandemic has changed many of our daily dynamics, and while we acknowledge the difficulties and challenges for the Organization at large, we believe that we need to keep looking ahead and work together to strengthen our inhouse capacities and to become less reliant on external services in order to ensure the delivery of quality conference services in accordance with the equal treatment of the six official languages of the United Nations, particularly in support of the work of the intergovernmental and expert bodies of the Organization.

Mr. Chair,

10. Changes to the Calendar of Conferences is also a matter of concern for our Group, since many activities and meetings have had to be postponed until 2021. Accordingly, we will closely follow the possible impact of these changes on the proposed programme budget for DGACM.
11. We also note that in 2019 the number of non-calendar meetings continued to increase, a factor that placed great constraints on the resources allocated to service otherwise mandated calendar meetings. We expect to receive updated information on how this has progressed in 2020, despite the transfer of many meetings and events to a virtual setting. In this regard, we would have hoped for more information on the implementation of cost-recovery mechanisms for meetings not related to the intergovernmental process across all duty stations.

12. The Group notes again the updated administrative instruction concerning the use of space for meetings, conferences, events and exhibits at Headquarters in New York. We continue to urge other conference-serving duty stations to follow suit and update their respective information circulars governing the use of United Nations premises, bearing in mind that all duty stations need to manage conference services in an integrated manner in the spirit of one United Nations.
13. With respect to conferencing facilities, the Group notes that the Secretary General's report lacks information in this regard. The Group has questions on this matter, especially in terms of the Economic Commission for Africa where regular renovations and technological improvements are needed to ensure that the Commission maintains its ability to provide cutting-edge conference services.
14. The Group continues to be concerned by the deteriorating conditions of the Nairobi conference center, which are severely hampering its capacity to provide conference services, especially for the regular calendar meetings of United Nations bodies headquartered in Nairobi. The Group looks forward to the start of the project that should address the aforementioned deteriorating conditions following the approval of section XIV of resolution 74/263.

Mr. Chair,

15. In conclusion, the Group stands ready to engage constructively on this agenda item and looks forward to its timely conclusion. I thank you.