

Draft Talking Points

- As members of the Ad Hoc Working Group are aware, the First Committee’s working methods have developed through over **25 years of reform efforts**, including rationalization and streamlining measures as seen in relevant Assembly resolutions and decisions¹. Some of these resolutions were adopted under an agenda item dedicated to the “revitalization of the work and reform of the agenda of the First Committee”. As a result, the First Committee has now been structured around three distinct stages of its work – **general debate, thematic discussion and action on the draft resolution/decisions**.
- With respect to the general debate, the first stage of the Committee’s work, a record-breaking 107 statements were made in the 69th session, compared with between 98 and 101 in recent years. During this segment, a question arose concerning the speaking order of the observer delegation of the **European Union**. I trust that the issue is well known to representatives covering this Working Group, and hope that a unified approach across the board in the General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies would be adopted.
- With regards to the second phase of the Committee’s work, namely, thematic discussions on seven established thematic clusters, I am pleased to note that an inter-governmentally agreed time limit, introduced for the first time following consultations at the 68th session, helped the segment to conclude on time. A record-breaking total of 265 statements were made during this segment.
- At the beginning of thematic discussions, an annual “exchange with the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and other High-level Officials on the current state of affairs in the field of arms control and disarmament and the role of international organizations with mandates in this field” was held. This consisted of a panel discussion with the participation of senior representatives of the ODA, the International Atomic Energy Agency, Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization and the Conference on Disarmament. In order to help this to be better focused, I introduced in advance a **sub-theme** entitled “increasing capacities to address weapons of mass destruction” and a concept paper thereon. I hope that this contributed to the fact that there were more interactions in the panel’s questions and answers segment, which lasted almost three times as long as the last year (42 minutes this session compared with 16 minutes in the 68th session).
- At the end of the thematic discussions, the First Committee held an annual 1.5 hour-exchange with **NGOs**. After extensive consultations, including with NGOs, and an informal meeting of the Committee on 20 November, it was agreed to allow, from the 70th session, NGOs to speak at the end of the first phase of the Committee’s work, namely, general debate, instead of the current practice to do so at the end of the thematic discussions. The provisional programme of work for 2015 adopted at the GA plenary meeting on 2 December 2014 reflected this change.

¹ Including resolutions 42/42N, 48/87, 48/264, 49/85, 57/300, 58/41, 58/126, 58/316 and 59/95 as well as decision 52/416

- The adopted provisional programme of work for 2015 also contains one **additional meeting for its thematic discussions** phase in order to address steady increase in the number of speakers, as mentioned before, bringing the total number of scheduled meetings for this phase from 11 to 12.
- Finally, allow me to raise an issue related to the planning of the “United Nations **summit** for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda”, to be held from 25 to 27 September 2015. The General Assembly, in its decision 69/449 of 2 December 2014, decided that the First Committee is to begin its work on Friday, 2 October 2015. Subsequently, the same Assembly decided, in its resolution 69/244 of 29 December 2014 in connection with the said summit, that the “general debate of the General Assembly at its seventieth session will begin on 28 September 2015”, which is Monday. Provided that the general debate lasts for the usual 6-7 days and will conclude during the weekend of 3-4 October 2015, it runs counter with the provision in resolution 51/241 of 31 July 1997 that “The Main Committees shall meet in substantive session only after the end of the general debate”, which may or may not have been superseded by resolution 69/244 when the GA decided to move the general debate to a period that would overlap with the First Committee. Other Main Committees may face a similar issue.² I hope that this question will be addressed by Member States collectively for a shared understanding.

² For example, in its decision 69/525 of 5 December 2014, the GA also decided that the Fourth Committee would commence its work on Thursday, 1 October 2015.